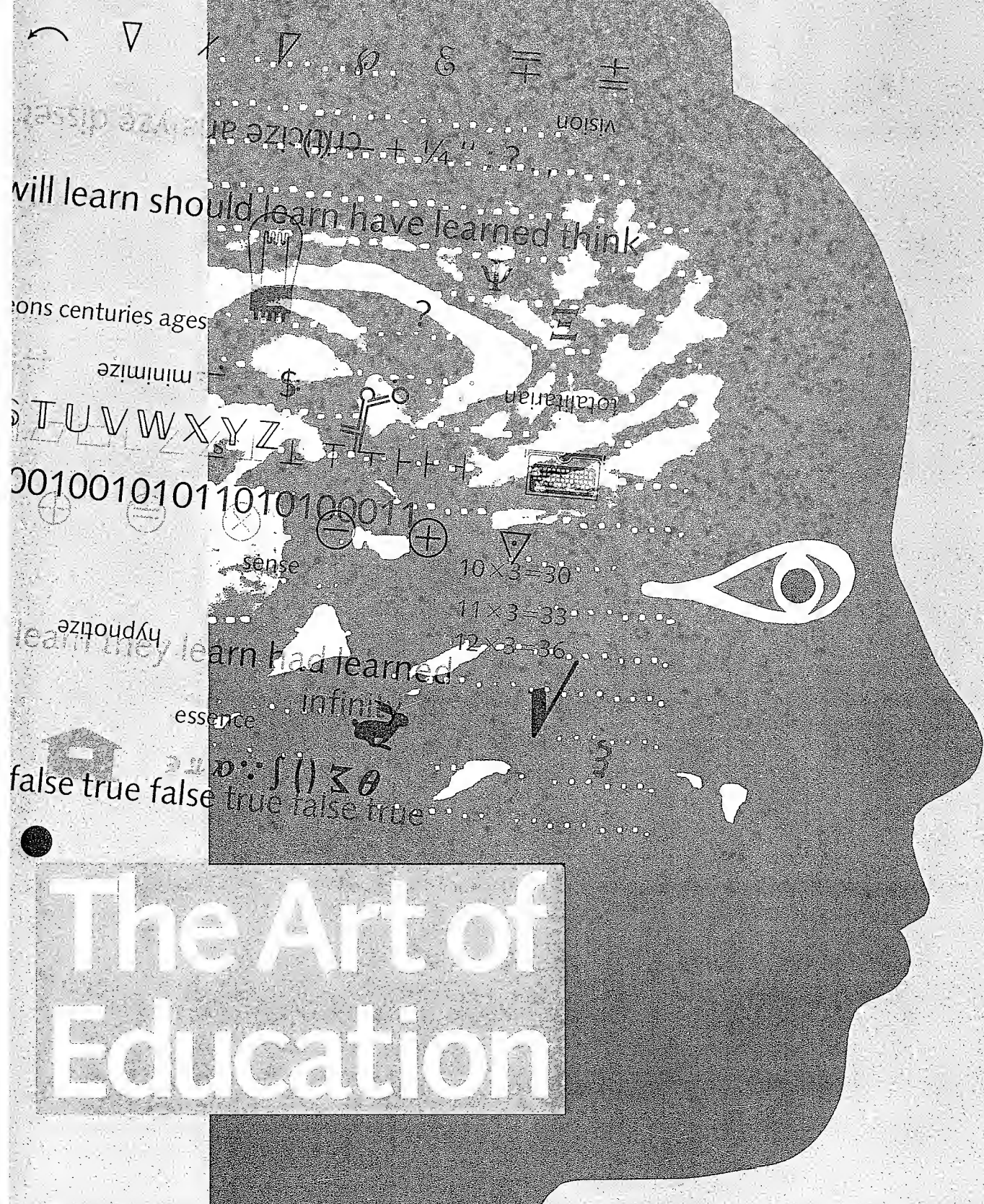


Heresies 25

AN ANTI-PCP PUBLICATION ON ART, POLITICS, AND CULTURE



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The Art of Education

Coming Soon: A New Format for HERESIES

In order to become more flexible and more responsive to exciting, current activity in the women artists' community, we'll be changing from a totally thematic approach to a thematic core,

with the balance of each issue devoted to articles, features, departments, art of all kinds, fiction, poetry, and political/cultural commentary on all matters feminist. Material welcomed.

Guidelines for Contributors: Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced and submitted in duplicate. Visual material should be submitted in the form of a slide, xerox, or photograph with title, medium, dimensions, and date noted; however, HERESIES must have a black-and-white photograph or equivalent to publish the work. We will not be responsible for original art. Those submitting either written

or visual material must accompany their contribution with a two or three line biography. All material must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope in order for it to be returned. We do not publish reviews or monographs on contemporary women. We cannot guarantee acceptance of submitted material. HERESIES pays a small honorarium for published material.

• *Heresies* is an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact and that in the making of art and all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that *Heresies* will stimulate dialogue around radical political and aesthetic theory, as well as generate new creative energies among women. It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to broadening the definition and function of art. • *Heresies* is published by a collective of feminists, some of whom are also socialists, marxists, lesbian feminists, or anarchists; our fields include painting, sculpture, writing, anthropology, literature, performance, art history, architecture, filmmaking, photography, and video. While the themes of the individual issues will be determined by the collective, each issue will have a different editorial staff, composed of members of the mother collective and other women interested in that theme. *Heresies* provides experience for women who work editorially, in design, and in production. *Heresies* will try to be accountable to and in touch with the international feminist community. • As women, we are aware that historically the connections between our lives, our arts, and our ideas have been suppressed. Once these connections are clarified, they can function as a means to dissolve the alienation between artist and audience, and to understand the relationship between art and politics, work and workers. As a step toward the demystification of art, we reject the standard relationship of criticism to art within the present system, which has often become the relationship of advertiser to product. We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women. We are not committed to any particular style or aesthetic, nor to the competitive mentality that pervades the art world. Our view of feminism is one of process and change, and we feel that in the process of this dialogue we can foster a change in the meaning of art. •

Erratum: In *HERESIES* 24: 12 Years, Kate Millett's *Madhouse*, *Madhouse* fell victim to a printer's error. It is reproduced properly on page 96.

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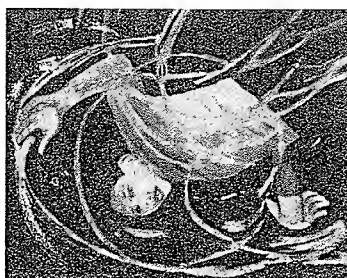
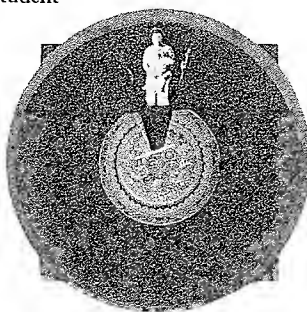
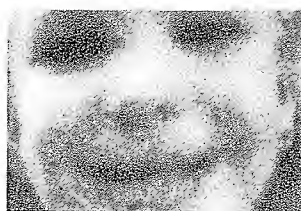
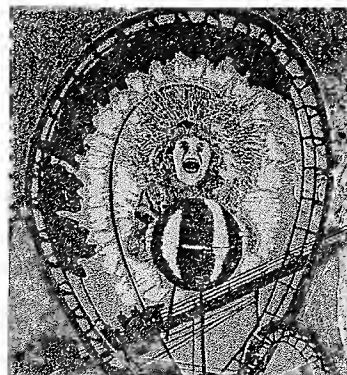
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The Art of Education



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NEW FORMAT COMING SOON: PART THEME/PART FEATURES, DEPARTMENTS & ART OF ALL KINDS UPCOMING ISSUES:

Crimes and Transgressions

What is now considered transgressive was in the past often judged criminal behavior for women. What are today's taboos in regard to the lives and the arts of women? Issues of "good taste" and "quality" will be called into question, along with "otherness" and "difference."

Women on Men

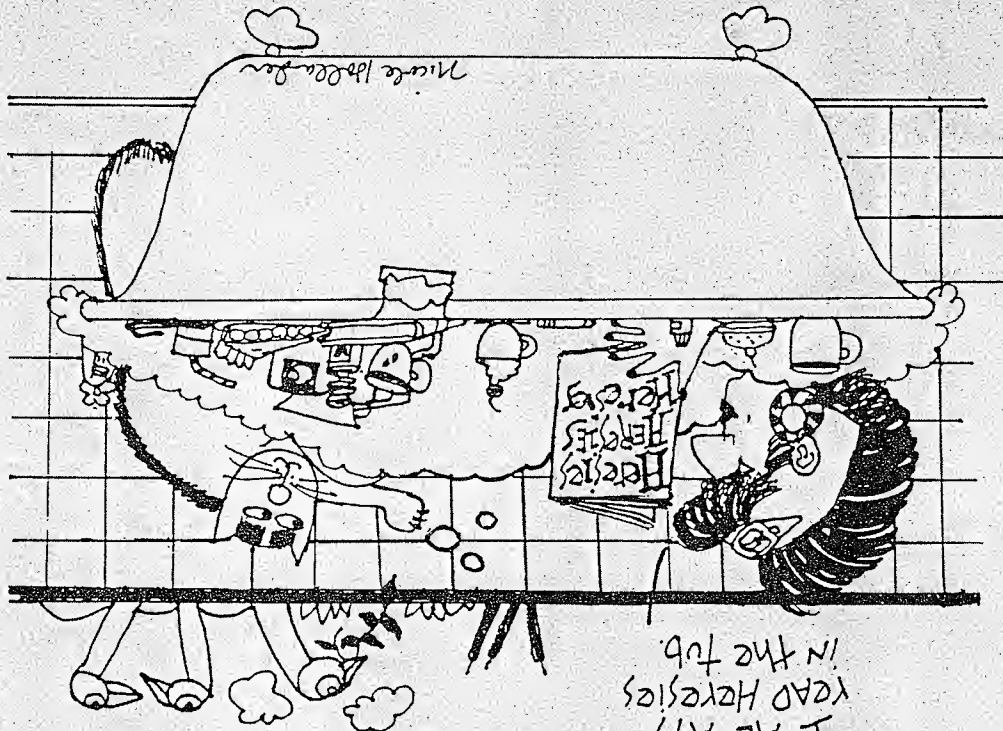
Women have always had plenty to say on the subject of the other. Hear what women think about their experiences of bosses, and dangerous strangers, brothers, fathers, lovers, friends,

Viva Latina!

Debut of Heresies new format! Thematic core will focus on Latina presence in the U.S. and its relationship to the rest of the hemisphere. It will examine critically the role of roots, place, and culture in restless modern life. Material welcomed.

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Collective Statement

The Heresies education collective came together at Rutgers University. Several years have passed since we began working together, and some of us are no longer connected with that (or any other) university. We will, however, always be involved with the process of learning and will never cease being students and teachers.

Initially we believed that working on the Heresies education issue would serve to clarify ideas we had about the necessity (or lack thereof) of formal education and a university degree. We were also curious to hear about women's experiences in other learning situations. Once the collective began to meet, it became clear that the matter of formal education was a secondary one.

Of primary importance, it seemed, was the effect of education, both formal and informal. How have we, and all other women, been formed into who we are? What role models have we followed, what constraints and freedoms have we been taught? How has what we've been taught affected our dreams and expectations of what we can hope to achieve in our lives? These are some of the questions that helped shape this issue of Heresies.

Our collective developed a healthy respect for the many scholarly journals we combed for interesting subjects, formats, and ideas. Scholars and theoreticians write articles that reflect their years of research. University presses and associations (such as the College Art Association) provide an enormous service by publishing this work. The women who responded to our call for submissions, however, responded not with theoretical material but with personal accounts of their own experiences with education — formal and otherwise. We found that many women responded from the viewpoint of having been miseducated (or myth-educated; it seems there are an abundance of institutional horror stories to be told). But we also received many stories about learning that inspired and uplifted us. In our search for material we discovered that if rote learning, final exams, tenure hearings, lesson plans, and racial and sexual exploitation are integral to the process of education, so are warmth, introspection, and personal exploration.

The women who wrote to us have insights and visions to share that might not have found a place in the more "serious" publications. We desired to take our contributors seriously and become a platform for their voices.

EMMA AMOS is a painter, printmaker, associate professor at Rutgers University, and member of the Heresies main collective.

SARA PASTI is a painter, printmaker, and arts organizer who lives and works in Brooklyn.

E. A. RACETTE is an artist and founder of Biophilie Activities Inc.

VALERI SIVILLI is a painter/printmaker/teacher/gardener who lives and works in Brooklyn, NY/Frenehbtown, NJ.

Special thanks to Miriam Taylor.

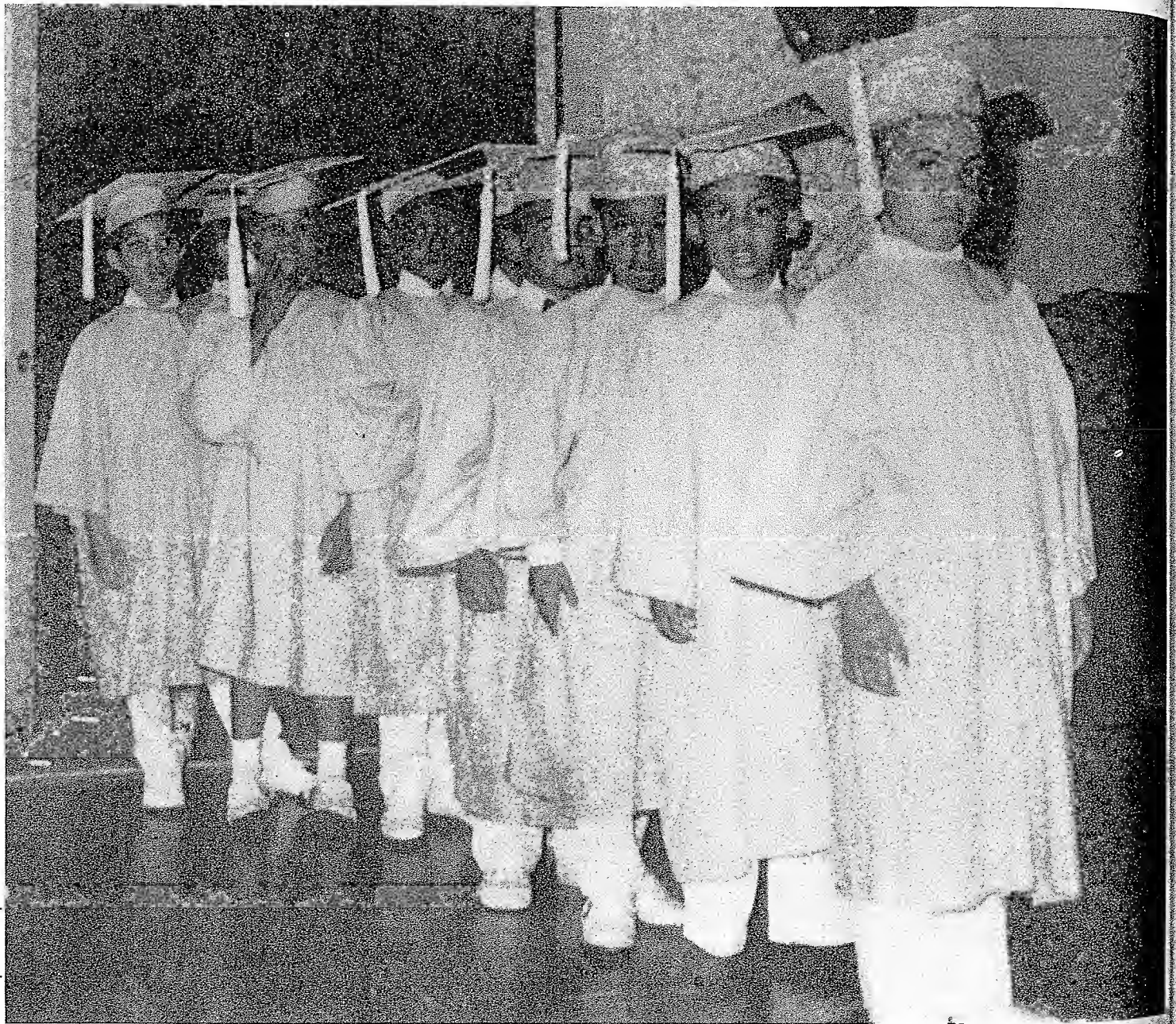


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Clarissa T. Sligh Kindergarten Class—Graduation 1970, photograph.

The Art of Education

ALICE SHAPIRO

I (The Beginning)

Sitting small so as to be unnoticed,
my stomach spoke in alternations
of pain and fear.

Looking back I wonder if the teacher saw
the anxious looks of dread
and passed me by deliberately.
Ah, Compassion, I honor thee.

Publicity, it seems, was evidently
the real root of agony,
and not the unknowingness of facts.
Apprehension of close attention to my self
chased away the open exchange of ideas,
and I passed through schooltime
in a huge cocoon of self-made isolation.

II (The Middle)

Somehow (the magic of it all!) — a slit,
a tiny crevice in the wrapping
showed me wondrous worlds
that needed to be known.
And only through participation
could I move from plant to flower.
I reached and drank.
The moisture nourished my anorexic soul
and filled it not with facts,
but questions.
Still frail and stupid
from so many dark Decembers,
mistakes were plentiful,
and starting over came to be a trend.

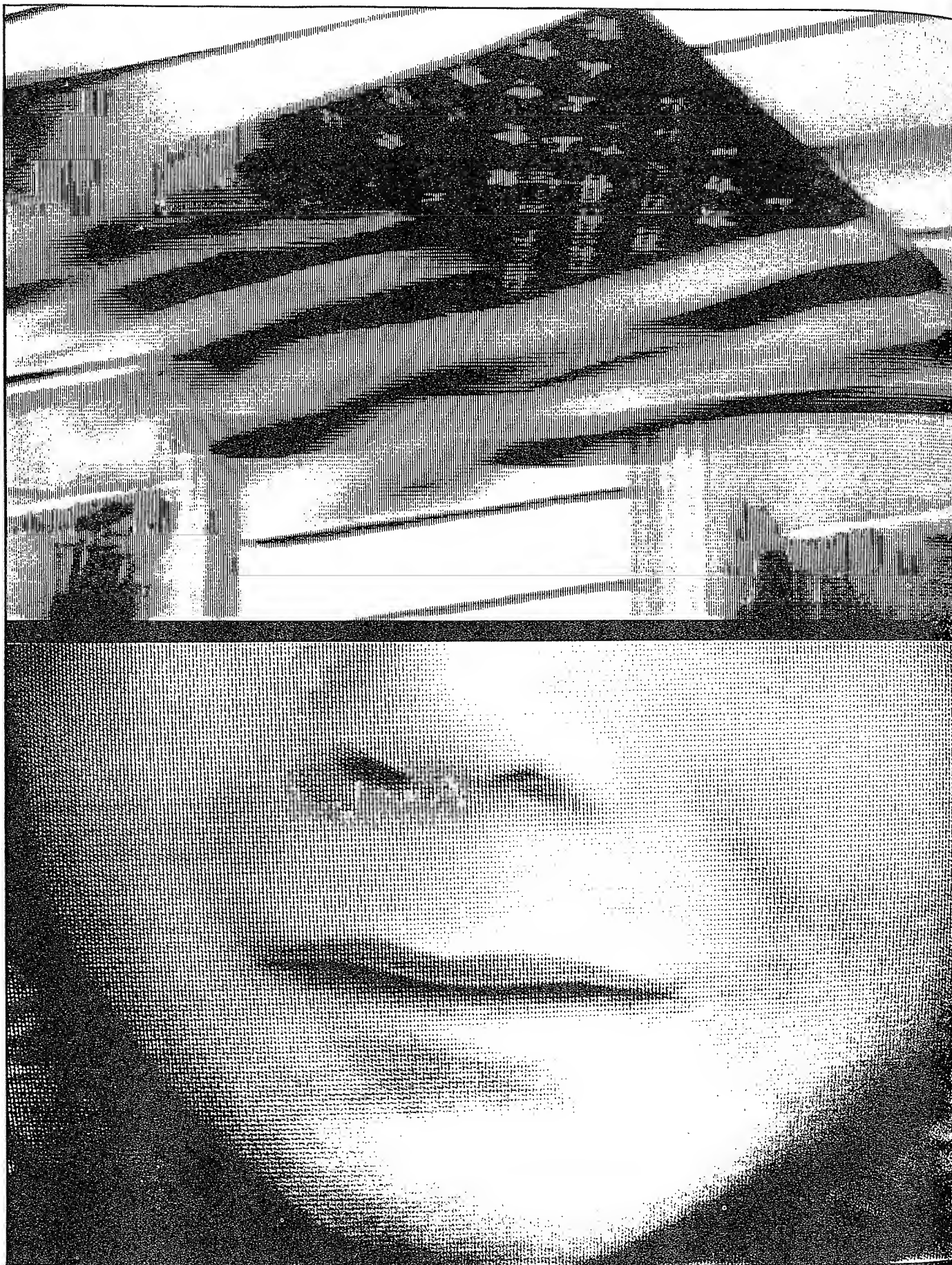
III (The End)

Out from under the thumbs of others,
the search for who I was began.
Again and once again the repetition
of the school and its command
brought me back to recognition
of that fearful child.

I acted out the same scenario, wasting time,
until at last, leaning forward,
lifting the chains from my ankles
without a blink,
I tossed them to the side.

IV (Epilogue)

Yesterday I met a man.
His esoteric school, he chastened,
stood for helping hands.
Even though, he hastened to reveal,
we must trust just ourselves,
it cannot be done alone.



Janet Vicario *Blind History*, 1989, two Cibachrome prints, 26"x19½".

Janet Vicario is an artist currently involved with media photography. She lives in NYC and in the past five years has organized shows with PADD.

On Failure & Anonymity

MIL SCH

The most useful course that an art school could offer today would be one called "On Failure And Anonymity," for these are the truest conditions of the artist's life, all artists, even the great and famous ones.

Art schools are graduating hundreds of MFAs, thousands of BFAs a year; many of these graduates have their eyes firmly fixed on the youthful fame and financial success of a handful of exceptionally talented, ambitious, and lucky men. In one generation art has come from being considered a financially marginal occupation to being seriously thought of as a potential source of wealth.

This view is encouraged by the present confusion between the older values and romantic scenarios of "high" art and the contemporary art market, a confusion that roughly parallels the difference between the family farm and agribusiness. The long becoming of an artist, the lifelong search for meaningful form, is being interfered with by a huge influx of money and of media attention and influence. Artists are now pressured by considerations and expectations of immediate, youthful financial success, although the ratio of such successes has not significantly altered de-

spite the change in emphasis.

The basic fact of the artist's existence remains that no one asks you to do whatever it is that you do, and just about no one cares once you've done it. Art in our era is a self-generated activity, and the marketplace is for most artists just a transient delusion.

Which of these existences should art schools prepare students for? The fantasy of a retrospective at a New York museum before the age of forty or the lifetime of art practice? The answer some students give is distressing. A CalArts graduate presented a paper at a CAA conference some years ago in which she blamed the school for not having prepared her for the realities of the art market, specifically for not having provided enough of a post-graduate network of connections to help her market her work and herself. But the logical outcome of this emphasis on networking and salesmanship is hucksterism, self-commodification, packaging at the expense of content. The art precipitated by this imperative to "make it" tends to be fast work that can be sold easily and quickly. Even "angst" must be "lite." The transformative nature of artwork may be degraded into the distillation of "Raw Hype" into "Pure Hype,"

as depicted in a *New Yorker* cartoon.

In the last five years not a term has gone by without a few, inevitably male, students bringing up how much money art is selling for. Only once in a while has a student, usually female, told me that she was in art school to "find out what this painting thing was about," and, even more significantly, looked to me with some concern and asked if, being a *woman* artist, I had a "life"?

Problems particular to gender aside, yes, I have a life. But the question is a crucial one. Expectations of glory veil the real life of the artist, and if being in the studio is the priority, the life is difficult.

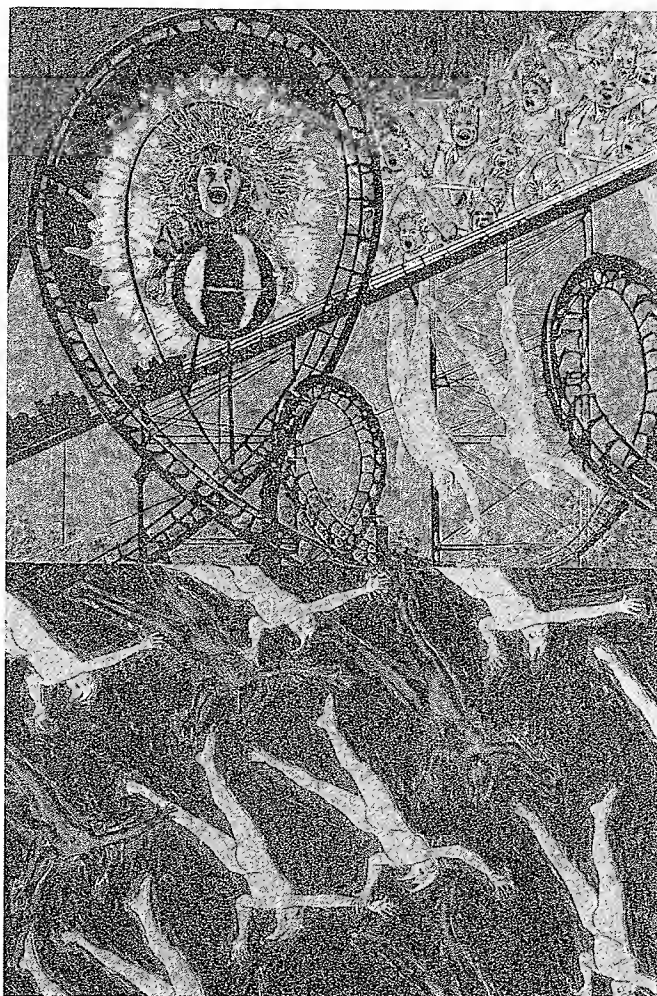
Let us consider first the more obvious and predictably difficult life of the artist who is not a financial success (that is to say, the majority of artists). This is a life of total insecurity. The artist is a pre-Columbian sailor adrift on a flat ocean at whose edge is an abyss. Just past the point the rent money runs out. Jobs are boring, ill paying, distracting, and exhausting. Or a more serious involvement with a "real" job threatens the continuity and ultimately the continuation of artwork. The committed artist risks being perennially broke, not to say penniless, a bum in fact. To be poor is to be infantilized in a country where adulthood is equated with financial independence. This life is grueling, ego battering, embittering, filled with deprivation. I do not rec-

ommend it to anyone except to the artist for whom there is no other choice.

However, some artists are "successful" in the commercial sense. But that success may not come for years, it probably will not last if it does come, and it has unforeseen consequences. No matter how impervious the individual may feel to corruption, success can corrupt, erasing past ideas and ideals. The earlier it comes the more likely that is. Success is never enough; the need for more is insatiable. Success can lead to paranoia. Those young men everyone looks to as examples are all obsessed with those who might want to get at them, knock them down. Because of their success they see themselves as targets, as indeed they had targeted the previous generation, for the link between progress/success and forms of patricide is grafted into the belief structure of Western civilization. Success can be paralyzing; approval can prevent change, because change risks the destruc-

tion of the desired commodity. Conversely, enforced, artificial "change" can become the commodity. Praise can be as intimidating as criticism. Both equally disturb the ecology of the life of the studio.

Real success is the ability to continue making art that is alive. For this the artist has to be educated to another set of values and a broader scope. Yet art schools underemphasize practical skills, liberal arts courses, and, worse



Judith K. Brodsky *Why do they crave the experience?* from *The Meadowlands Strike Back* series, 1989, color lithograph, 60"x41".
Judith K. Brodsky is a professor of visual arts at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University.

yet, even their art history courses are often insufficient and cursory.

To survive the long run, to continue to function, someone ought to tell you that there is a long run. To survive, it is necessary to stand for something within yourself and yet to always doubt your own deepest beliefs. It is necessary to have the agglomeration of terrors and hopes, delights, and doubts that make up a soul. Perhaps a soul is culturally bound and determined, but it can be more than a slave to fashion. Follow fashion and be fifteen minutes late. Trends are fleeting. A lifetime of art cannot be built on a weather vane.

Real failure comes to those who accept their status quo, who do not press against their limitations. This seems to happen more or less to almost all artists, at some point down the path. The artist is an organism, genetically condemned to atrophy and death as all living organisms are. Only the persistence of dissatisfaction and struggle ensure a true form of success in the life of the artist.

The life of the work, the ecology of the studio is what I am interested in, when the doors are closed on the pressures of the marketplace. And in this life there is always failure, no matter how much money is made. For it is a given that there is always a gap between what the artist wants the work to be and what it is, between the original goal and the weird

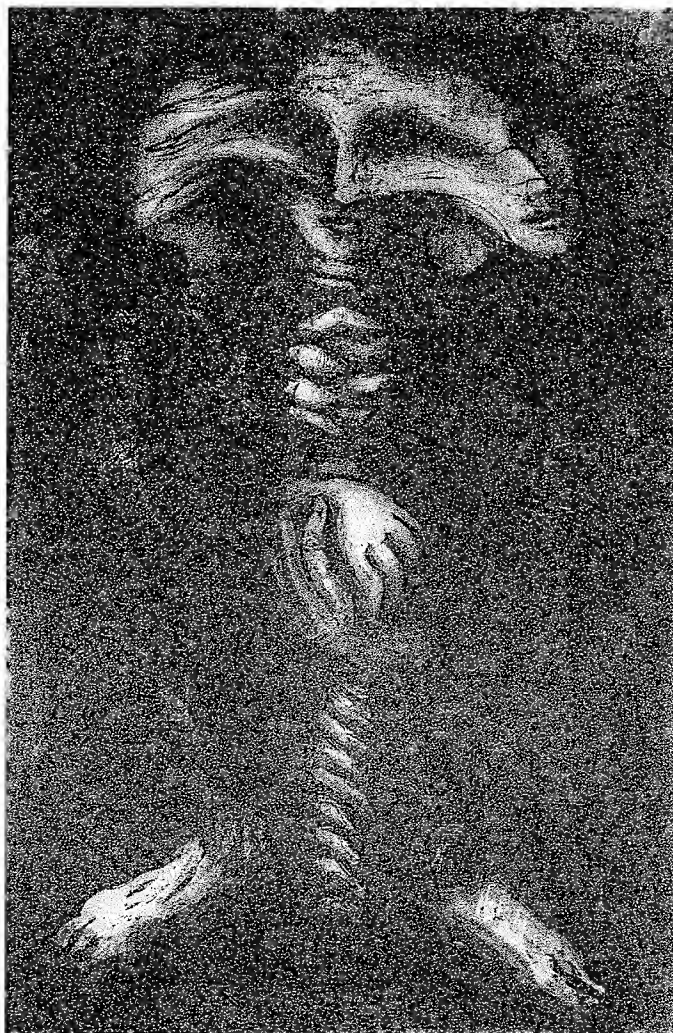
paths that are taken. Life continues only as long as the blind chase down the path. There is tremendous fear on that chase because the relationship between artist and artwork is one of intimacy with the self, and intimacy is truly terrifying and can never be fully achieved. The closer one comes to something really intimate (which may seem really foreign), the faster one springs back, and thereby fails.

Despite the fear of intimacy and the impossibility of achieving completeness within and without, there can be a wonderful sense of anonymity in the practice of art. As at a noisy flea market, sometimes a silence and a slowness can overcome the busyness, and then small, insignificant treasures become distinct. In these moments you know no one and are no one. A friend of mine describes in terms of reverence and sexuality the rags she wears when she paints. Every layer discarded and replaced

by street clothes is an added layer of anxiety and loss of intimacy with her self.

The greatest thing an art school could give a student is access to this anonymous life of the studio, recognition of its supreme importance to the inner survival of the artist, and to the creation of meaningful art that transcends fashion and money.

Mira Schor, a painter living in New York, is coditor of M/E/A/N/I/N/G, a journal of contemporary art.



Nancy Wells *The Spinning of the Top*, 1988, soft-ground etching, 23½"x35".

In third grade there was one bad boy named James.

E. A. RACETTE

He gave the nun the finger, the bird, flipped her off, or whatever term you know for that hand signal that means fuck.

She was sooooo upset! and obviously excited. She went and told the other nun and they both, together, made each of us children individually, by ourselves, come out into the hall and describe to them what the sign meant!!! and they kept asking for more details.

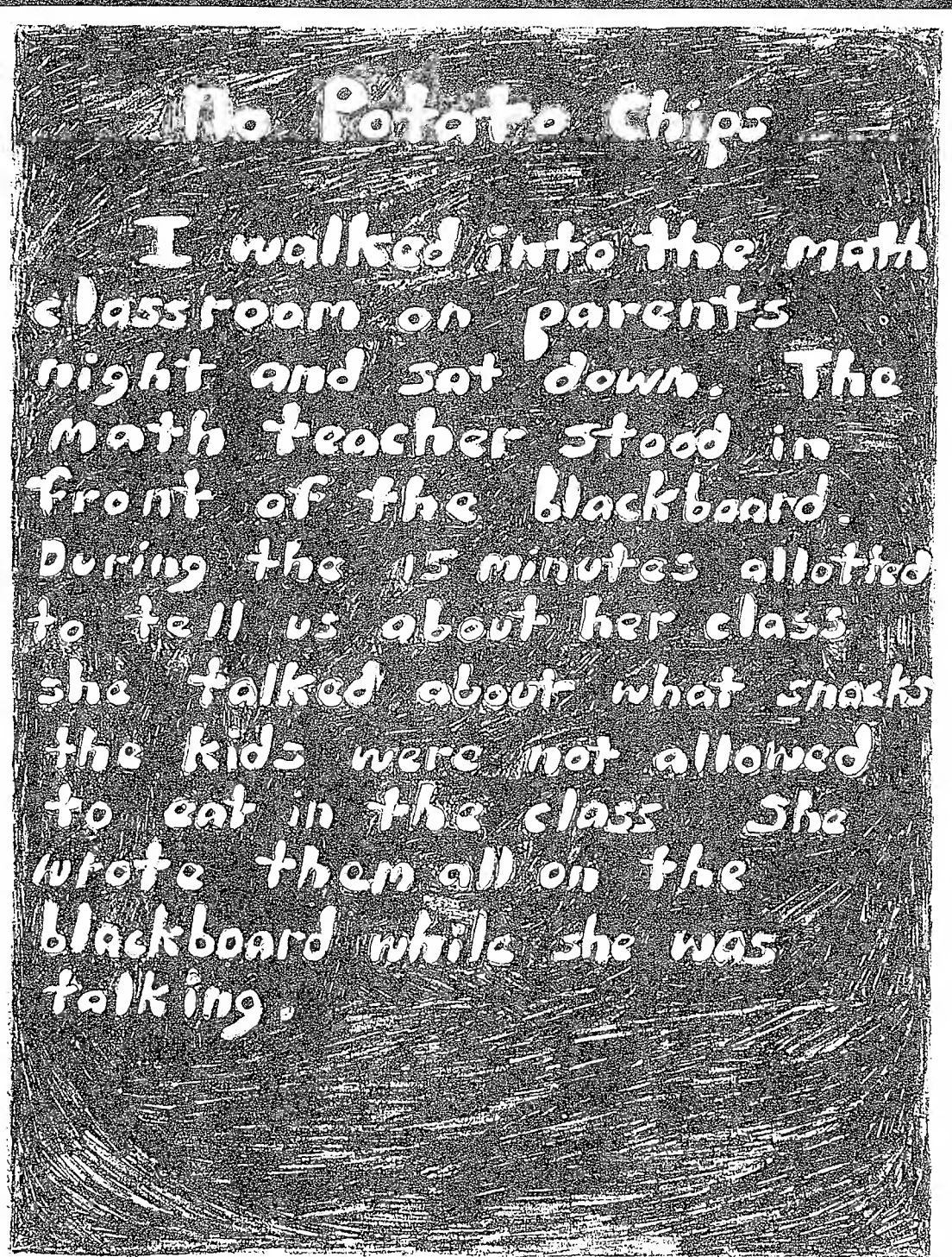
I don't know what the other children said. I said it's when two grown people take off all their clothes, and they said, "YESSSSSSS ... ??? ... AND ... ???". And they put their bodies together, I said. I was so shy and nervous and I felt that I wasn't supposed to know so I felt shame because I knew. They were so insistent on my describing it.

Now I am imagining how wet their sweet little cunts must have been that day



THE WONDERFUL PIG OF KNOWLEDGE .

Donna J. Evans is a printmaker-cartoonist-painter-bookmaker. She was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1956 and moved to NYC in 1984.



Judy Malloy No Potato Chips, 1989, pen and ink.

Judy Malloy is an artist and writer who lives in California. In her experimental books she uses information — found and imagined — to describe the world in which she lives. She is currently working on *The Other Shoe*, a narrabase (narrative database) about several days in the life of a single parent with two small children.

Fifth Grade

NIKKI HERBST

On the wooden floor
Katherine Karr drew the
GREAT LAKES
in white chalk so she could
ETCH the image
in their minds.
Lake Erie had little whitecaps
where she'd hit the floor
repeatedly
during her lecture.

I felt her anger as she jumped
from a chair
to STOMP a verb-with-no-object into them
landing BANG on old-lady black shoes:
JUMP!
She worked, climbing from the Great Lakes
to the chair top
again, BANG,
and again, BANG:
JUMP!

She was dry and thin but
she could land
HARD: NOW,
who can tell me what kind of verb
'jump'
is? While the others laughed
or stared open-mouthed
I squirmed
wanting to SHAKE them.
I loved her.

She put us in rows: you are
the HAVES, you are
the HAVE-NOTS.
She didn't have patience for niceties:
these two rows are the
bluebirds and the rest of you
are the redbirds.
She had to teach the SIMPLEST THINGS
to those who'd been
nicely lied to
for years already.

She apologized
for neglecting us haves
but she never said I'm sorry
when she threw
the gold-painted

plaster-of-Paris bust of
ABRAHAM LINCOLN WHO FREED THE SLAVES
and it SMASHED
on the floor
right next to Buzzy Olsen.

I can't remember
if he'd been asleep, noisy, or stupid
he was
so often
ASLEEP, NOISY, or STUPID
and no one knew
if she'd missed on purpose
so it worked
for AWHILE to keep
their attention.

I went in early and stayed late
and she snapped at me:
THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU HERE
well, take this
and READ it.

I read THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY
right there in class
while she tried to teach them
arithmetic, geography, and social studies
jumping, throwing, and shouting.

Later there were other books she gave me:
read THIS.

But they also meant:
don't raise your hand to answer in class
or the others will never try.

They also meant:
I'm sorry.
I ACCEPTED
the whole message
tucked inside the book bribes.

After the first quarter
I took my
report card with my
FIRST EVER GOOD GRADE IN CITIZENSHIP
and jammed it
at my fourth grade teacher's FACE
as I passed her in the hall
or at least
that's what I remember.
I was TRIUMPHANT.



Nikki Herbst is a northern California poet who is currently attending the Iowa Writers' Workshop.



Lynne Cohen Classroom, n.d., silver print, 20"x24". Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York.

Lynne Cohen is a Canadian photographer who has been documenting interiors for over fifteen years. She lives in Ottawa and exhibits her work internationally.

Lately the names and images of special kids have started coming back to me from my fifteen years as an elementary school teacher. Some days I wake up with an urgent need to get to school, to get on with the work. Some days I wake up with a warm feeling as if I've made contact with "my kids" for the first time, a glow of recognition and accomplishment like an enthusiastic hug. Often I see the kids or their parents in my dreams: Leticia with her long black braids so tight they gave her almond-shaped eyes; Jesus with his starched, ironed white shirt daily, accompanied by his mother always in a black shawl; Jimmy and his mom waiting in the yard; Jose's father coming in the door with the cardboard shoe he'd made.

My first year as a teacher was 1969. I had chosen to teach in the barrio of East Los Angeles because I knew some Spanish. At the time Spanish wasn't needed for the job, even though most of the kids had never spoken anything else. Technically a barrio is a neighborhood, though the word is often used as a synonym for ghetto. Even now in the late 1980s East Los Angeles has the largest Spanish-speaking population outside Mexico City. In 1969 we were part of the last wave of teachers hired in a teacher shortage.

In many ways conditions have never been so wonderful for teachers in the public schools as they were then. The 1970s were years today's teachers can only imagine, especially if they teach in inner-city schools. We had money for materials and training from many federal titles: compensatory education, bilingual education, sex equity, and so on. We were *told* to be innovative, to develop our own curricula. We were *rewarded* for involving community volunteers; we were *encouraged* to develop learning continuums, to hold parent conferences instead of reducing a child's learning mastery to a single letter or number. I rejoice that I never had to fill out a report card until the end of my career.

I hurried through my teaching years. Many things that happened I didn't really experience at the time. Now they seem

Seize the Time

CRICKET POTASH



Joni Sternbach From the *Cameo* series, 1989, photograph.

to be floating right on the surface of my memory. I reach in and there they are, encapsulated, wrapped in wonderful iridescent globes, ready to be taken out and examined.

I had had to abruptly leave the classroom—a profession, an identity, and a community in which I had invested fifteen years of work and love. I was having an acute exacerbation of multiple sclerosis, a disease I knew I had but which had produced no symptoms in me for over ten years. Suddenly, bumping into walls and not being able to stand for more than five minutes, worrying about falling down the stairs more than the kids getting out safely during a fire drill, not being able to quickly get to the kid who had split his lip to comfort him, I was forced to face my need to leave teaching. Now I have more time to remember those years.

One memory: the cardboard-and-construction-paper shoe Jose's father made for us, an exact copy of a sturdy walking shoe, probably the size that would have fit his seven-year-old son. I accepted it with "mil gracias," a thousand thanks, and a bright smile. I displayed it prominently atop my working table, where the children would see it when they came to work with me. Now it's on a shelf above my desk. It's faded and has been mended several times in its travels—the colours were bright when I first saw it. The body is made from a heavy brown supermarket bag, the heel and sole made of cardboard finished off smoothly, like slick new soles. Bright green satin wrapping ribbon decorates the top of the shoe and continues down the front seam, and there's a special fringed section of purple construction paper that holds the laces and gracefully ends in *el piquito*, the head and beak of a bird. There are also upside-down horse-shoes on the ankles, cut out of bright multicolored wrapping paper. The top lace hole, carefully punched, holds a small name tag with the artist's spelling of his name, "Joze." I try to imagine what it meant to Jose, an illiterate itinerant worker, to make this for his son to take to school

and to see it displayed.

Daily we sang, in Spanish, the song that was the shoe's inspiration. This short little song—"El Zapatero (The Shoemaker)"—proved to be a favorite. The lyrics and a translation (not lyrical) follow:

EL ZAPATERO

Yo lo dije al zapatero
que me hiciera unos zapatos
con el piquito redondo,
como tienen los patos.
¡Malhaya zapatero!
Como me engano!
Me hizo los zapatos
y el piquito no!

THE SHOEMAKER

I told the shoemaker
to make me some shoes
with a tip as round
as a duck's beak.
That darn shoemaker!
How he tricked me!
He made the shoes but
Not the tip!

The humor in the song is based on a pun. *Piquito* means little beak as well as tip. Jose's father made *his* shoe with a wonderful bird's beak.

For me, the first three years of teaching were the hardest. I learned to juggle the hundreds of small, slippery balls that were aspects of my profession: schedules, meetings, spitballs, parent conferences, candy addiction, test anxieties (theirs *and* mine) fist fights, and outright defiance. I learned basic control techniques as well as my own limitations—just how many reading groups I could keep track of and how much homework I would look at. The week I had yard duty was especially challenging. I couldn't do any set-up or relax with a cup of coffee or go to the bathroom while the kids were out at recess. It became almost Pavlovian to respond to bells. Even today I find myself sort of waiting for something at 11:30 a.m.—it's time for the

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lunch bell. I learned to extend my authority from my person (5' 3" tall and parked near the lunch benches) to the far kickball diamond without shouting or running after, for example, the culprit with the matches. I learned to be larger than life, to have eyes everywhere and ears, too. How else could I have learned those Spanish curses my aides—were too well-mannered to teach me?

I loved all the learning I did during those years. I was wide open to finding out who these small people were, anxious to give them the love and respect I felt I had been deprived of during my school years. I learned how much a seven-year-old knows and how much a seven-year-old *wants* to know. I learned how easily, how quickly their curiosity about the unknown and their tender confidence when they've learned something new can be squelched with a harsh glance or an unjust rule.

I had a wonderful time learning *with* my classes—keeping a Spanish/English dictionary at hand, right next to the *Pequeño Larousse Illustrado* with its encyclopedic information and beautiful color illustrations. The *Larousse* was invaluable. How else would we have known which dinosaur was which, or what to call webbed feet in Spanish and how to distinguish them from talons? Or colors? Red, blue, and yellow simply weren't enough to name the deep reddish-purple of Anna's jacket or the shimmering green on the ducks in the park.

I learned to seize the time and teach from what was happening. Like the day my class went out for their afternoon recess and found hundreds of woolly black caterpillars on the ground outside our temporary bungalow. The fuzzy creatures rained down from the mulberry trees, and I think the girls jumping rope were first to notice them as the ground got slicker under their feet. The cafeteria workers scrounged some large empty mayonnaise jars for us. We collected leaves from the trees and twigs for the caterpillars to use as anchors, then spent the rest of the afternoon watching their quiet, writhing

dance as they spun their chrysalises. The class clown held his breath along with the rest of us as the furry caterpillars sealed themselves into their temporary changing rooms.

The next two weeks were filled with intense observation and recording. Our classroom was quickly converted into a scaled-down mission control center. We covered the walls with drawings and diagrams. What we had seen, what we guessed was going to happen, and what we had learned as fact. The chart rack carried daily bulletins; the science table held the jars of twigs with their strange translucent leaves, the chrysalises. We crossed off days on the calendar, read what we recorded, drew pictures of what we saw. We used as many books as I could find to learn who these creatures were, what would happen next.

The class made predictions, developed theories. Which one would come out first, what would it look like, would it be a butterfly or "only" a moth? There was always a team of at least two observers letting everyone know about any changes.

This went on until one day during reading there was a silent movement noticed by the observation team. A change of color that had been noticed yesterday was interesting—*this* was exciting.

Everything in the regular schedule stopped. No one cared if it was their turn to play handball. The kickball diamond was empty. There was no screaming, shouting line at the water fountain. The entire class stayed in at recess to see what would happen next. We took the lids off the wide-mouthed jars and opened the transoms in anticipation of the exodus. Once again we all held our breath. Very slowly the wet-winged newborns emerged. They paused a moment to open and flex their wings, then blew out of the room like tissue paper scraps. One child, transfixed by the metamorphoses, asked in a whisper, "But ... where did they come from, Teacher?"

Cricket Potash is an artist living in Los Angeles.

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Deborah Willis *Elementary School Class in the Gaza Strip, 1989*, photograph.



P o e m

A Manual for Survival

MARIE CARTIER

Write a poem beginning with "I want."

Write a poem about being in a room
where everything is your favorite color
and what you do there.

Write a poem about musical notes
that talk to you.

Write a poem about whether or not you were
breast-fed and how that feels.

Write a poem about your favorite fairy tale
and why.

Write a poem using five words
that describe your perfect mother.

Write a poem using five words
that describe your perfect father.

Write a poem about mothers and fathers.

Write a poem about turning eleven
and twenty-one

and what your initial thoughts were
on leaving decades behind.

Write a poem that would solve the
problems of the world
if everyone read it.

Write a poem about candlelight, wine,
soft music — alone.

Write using your favorite part of your body
as the voice.

Write in the voice of your favorite musician
your best lover

your first-grade teacher

and your bus driver

in second grade

or your local drug pusher in tenth

or your college admissions clerk

or your first good English teacher.

Then write a poem in appreciation
of your own voice.

Write a poem meant to be sung.

Praise Bessie Smith in it.

Write a poem meant to be whispered.

Praise Daniel Berrigan in it.

Write a poem meant to be screamed.

Praise Patti Smith in it.

Write a poem about being black (if you're white).

Praise Angela Davis in it.

Write a poem about being white (if you're black).

Praise Bobby Kennedy in it.

Write a poem about being poor (if you have money).

Praise Caesar Chavez in it.

Write a poem about being rich (if you have no money).

Praise Eleanor Roosevelt in it.

Write a poem about missing the city (if you're from the country).

Praise neon lights in it.

Write a poem about missing the country (if you're from the city).

Praise a cornfield in it.

Write a poem about writing a poem

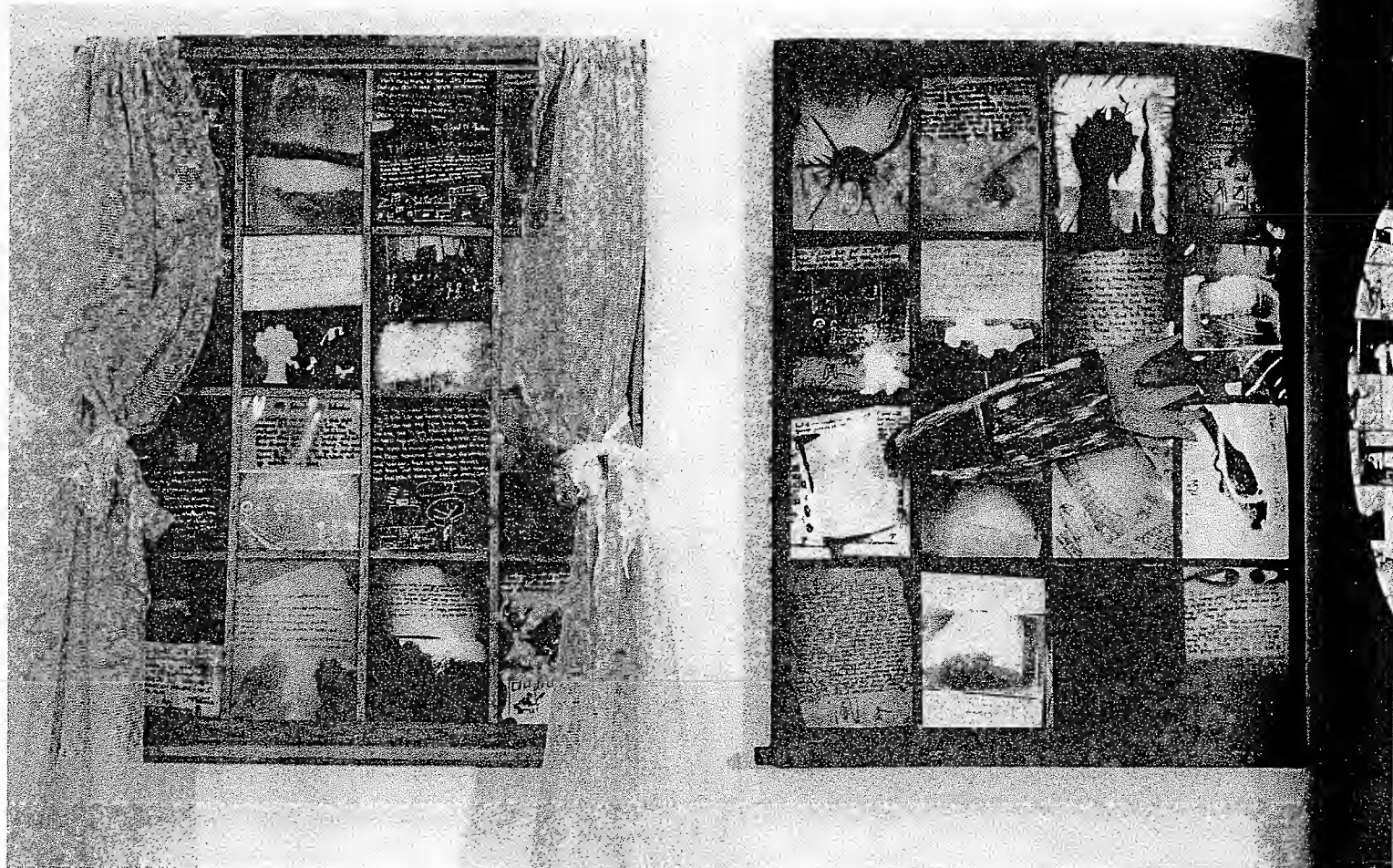
about writing a poem about writing a poem.

Then write your poem.

Praise yourself in it.

Working Together

MERYL MEISLER AND THE I.S. 291 DROP INS



Above: Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins from I.S. 291 *Country Window* and *Broken Window*, from *Window Series*, 1989, mixed media, 38"x61"x9" and 37"x43"x2½". Facing page: Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins from I.S. 291 *Question Marks*, 1988, installation at "Education and Democracy" exhibition, Dia Art Foundation, New York, each panel 48"x96".

Windows

We made a window with all really great stories, but I have to admit mine was the best. I'm not trying to be conceited or anything, but I just had to tell you the truth.

My feelings about the story about Michael is that it was a very sad thing that happened. He was shot, and I ran down my block to see what was going on and everybody was telling me that Michael was shot. I looked and I saw blood dripping down from his neck. I was throwing up.

Lakisha Owens December 11, 1989

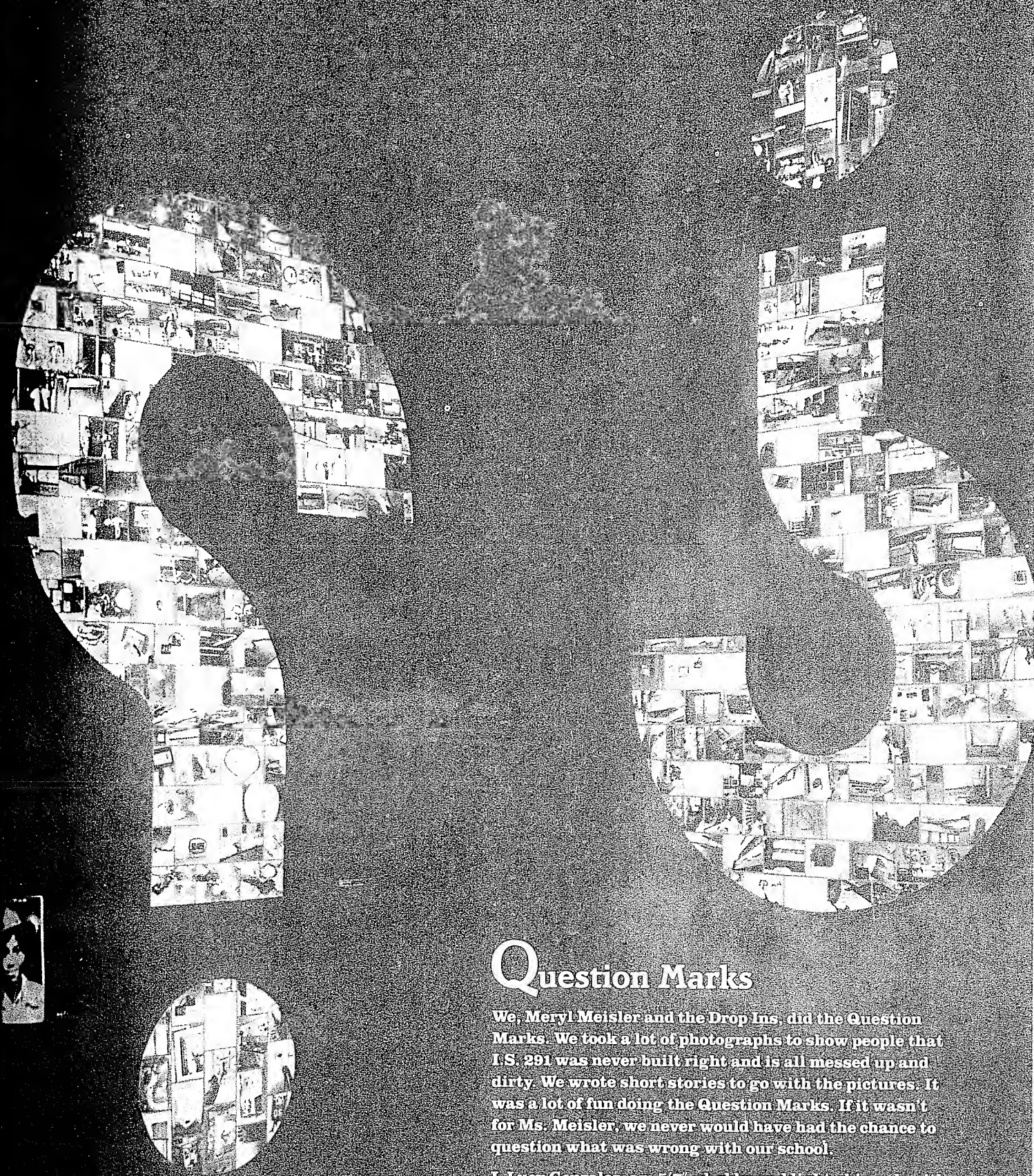
My friend told me to go back down the block. His sister was upset, his friends and everybody in his family were very depressed.

I can tell you a lot about Lakisha Owens. She is nice, self-centered. She is fourteen years old. She can be very quiet sometimes, but when she is mad it's best that you shouldn't say nothing to her. She is very bashful sometimes. But Lakisha is very nice in her artwork, and she has a little talent in her writing.

Meryl Meisler has been teaching in the NYC public school system for ten years, eight of which have been at I.S. 291. She is a recipient of the 1990 Samuel Award for Excellence in Teaching and a 1990 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Photography.



The Art of
Education

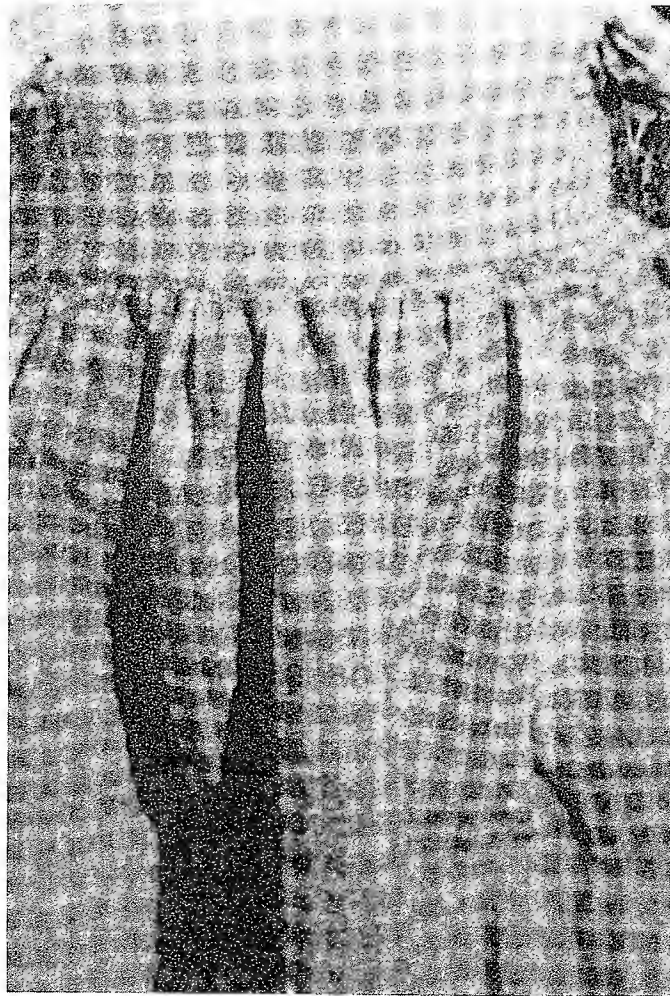


Question Marks

We, Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins, did the Question Marks. We took a lot of photographs to show people that I.S. 291 was never built right and is all messed up and dirty. We wrote short stories to go with the pictures. It was a lot of fun doing the Question Marks. If it wasn't for Ms. Meisler, we never would have had the chance to question what was wrong with our school.

I, Lucy Gonzalez, am 5'7", chubby and light-skinned, with brown hair and brown eyes. I am fifteen years old. I've been in I.S. 291 for four years. I was left back because I failed two major subjects—math and science—so I didn't graduate. I am happy because I got Ms. Meisler again, three years straight. I love Ms. Meisler's class because I learn a lot of things with cameras and we take pictures.

Lucy Gonzalez November 27, 1989



Carolien Stikker Dress, 1987, photograph.

Carolien Stikker has exhibited widely in the United States and Europe and was the recipient of a 1989 New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship. Her work has recently been published in Aperture.

Sewing Class*

When I took Home Economics in 1958
I just couldn't make that old apron
The stitches just wouldn't come straight
from that old sewin' machine
I twisted and turned
that red and white material so much
that when the teacher looked at it

*Inspired by Patricia Jones's poem "Mammies"

AISHA ESHE

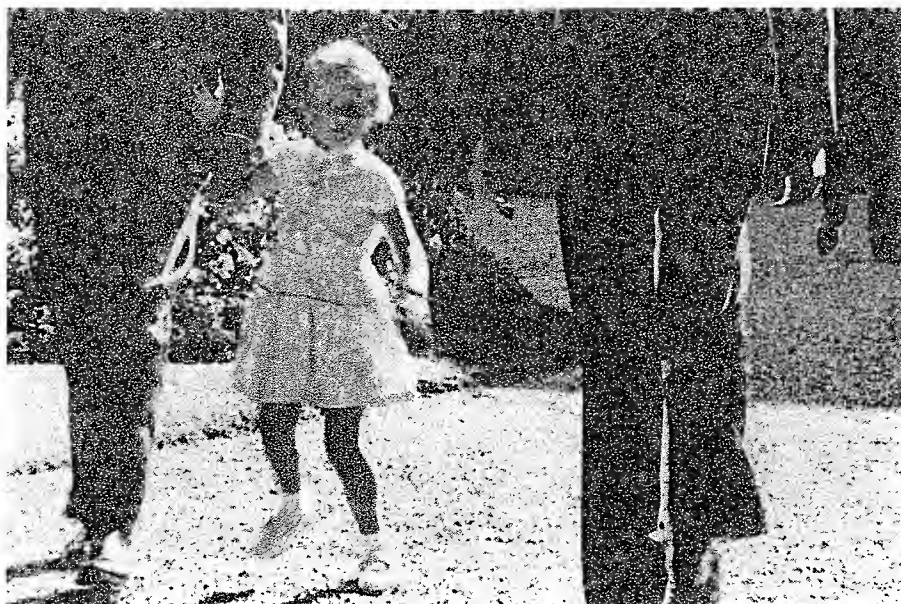
she said
"Marilyn this looks just like a rag"

I took my "rag" home
and threw it on the closet floor
Hell
I didn't want to wear no apron anyway

Poetry by Aisha Eshe is widely published; recently she published a novella, Blood at the Root.

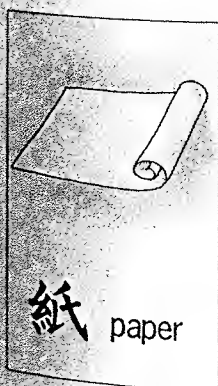
Children's Lives As Curriculum

GAIL DRAPER

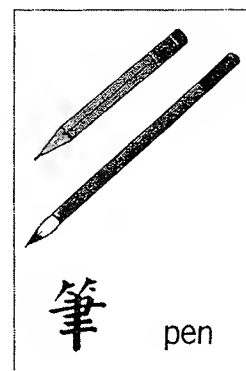


Carolien Stikker *Father and General*, 1986, photograph.

Over the past few years we have watched many of the reputedly “progressive” schools succumb to the pressure of the back-to-basics movement. They now offer *enriched* white bread, but white bread just the same. The “open classroom,” a catchall term for experimental and innovative education, is becoming known as the failure of the overpermissive sixties. Many of the educational principles of discovery and respect are being lost. So four years ago we opened a school to confront this trend. The following is a distillation of the process of creating a responsive curriculum that emerges from the needs and interests of the school community.



Children are seekers, trying to make sense of the world. In creating a curriculum, my most important task is to engage their imagination. At the root of reading, writing, math, and science is the imagination being applied to physical and spiritual experience. If it seems possible to make sense of the world, children will want to become competent in the means of communication offered by society. So I begin with what they care about deeply. We work outward from what is internally meaningful to the disciplines and tools of thought, expres-





Carolien Stikker *Brother and Sister, 1987*, photograph.

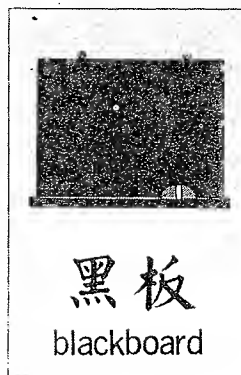
I applauded their cooperation with one another but recognized it was borne of the desire to be against someone or something else.

sion, and relationship. The curriculum evolves differently each year based on shared passions, tragedies, and routines.

LANGUAGE ARTS

It is hard to isolate a language arts program and assign it to a particular time of day, or to think of it as a collection of rules regarding verb agreement and dependent versus independent clauses. Embedded among the rules of grammar and syntax is a deep structure of content. The meaning behind the form is what we want to express for ourselves and communicate to others. Two-year-olds speak in this deep structure of meaning—using nouns and verbs. Then they learn to elaborate and refine shades of meaning and finally to conform to formal standards of language, the surface structure. At heart, language and its written representation are symbols, which both express and shape thought.

By five, children can exercise symbolic thought in a variety of ways. They are asked to create symbols to represent their experience or understanding. Perhaps memories of a field trip or pictures to illustrate an oral story will activate these symbols. Once the class made lotto boards based on a fairly complex version of the



Chanukah story, scouring the book for images. With very little guidance they devised both the more universal symbols of Judaica (menorahs, stars of David, etc.) and their own idiosyncratic ones, such as "the wife of a Maccabee."

The students are also asked to use and interpret symbols. This may or may not include words. Recipes, for instance, are written in a combination of words and pictures. A series of craft books are available with sequenced picture instructions that the children translate into cars, boats, monsters, and castles. Family signs are an opportunity to include print and enhance their sense that they can learn to read. The children are indeed using a much broader range of cues to interpret print, including color, shape, configuration, and script. A very young reader soon learns to distinguish STOP and EXIT signs, as well as A & P's, and most assuredly, McDonald's.

At Rosh Hashanah a visitor came to share some of the meaning and ritual of the holiday. After I reassured him that the children had become familiar with the idea of human sacrifice during our study of the Aztecs, he decided to tell them the story of Abraham and his son. He emphasized that God was teaching the word that the taking of human life was not required as homage, and that at that time in history, animal sacrifice was taking the place of human sacrifice. "Oh, that's just like in 'Snow White,'" piped up one girl. There was a puzzled pause.

"What do you mean?" he finally asked us.

"Well, the hunter kills a pig instead of Snow White and then takes its heart back to the queen," answered the girl. I was floored by her grasp of what was significant in this story, and how it pertained to another. This is no less than a fledgling study of comparative literature, the formal discipline in which plots and themes are compared and contrasted from one story to the next.

Contrasts themselves can be instructive in a curriculum where values are also the subject of analysis. This year we read a black American folk tale about Flossie and the fox. Before long it became obvious to us all that this was a variation of "Little Red Riding Hood." What was interesting to me, in my battle to find ways to make children conscious of the sexism embedded in our culture, was the fact that in this story Flossie outwits the fox! She is clearly capable of taking care of herself: intervention on the part of a heroic woodcutter was entirely unnecessary. Given the opportunity

the children were able to describe this distinction and thereby call it into consciousness.

Reading, like other language skills, begins with what is made most meaningful to children. Because different kids think in different ways, we can offer and be aware of a variety of methods that will be more or less appropriate for a given child. I primarily use a method that reflects the holistic thinking of most five-year-olds, as opposed to the more analytical thought required for, say, a phonics approach.

I help them begin to read with *key words*: each word is chosen by a child for its personal significance. They choose such words as *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *pumpkin*, *ice skater*, *scuba diver*, *crystal*. Among the key words there is hardly one word from the Dolch Word List of words most common in the English language. In the beginning they use a whole constellation of cues to identify a word—its length, its initial letter, a mental list of the words they've chosen, or, as one boy con-

fessed, "I remember *pumpkin* because I use an orange pen."

MATHEMATICS

In math it is necessary to develop a deep tactile knowledge of mathematical principles. Using three-dimensional objects allows the children to handle the "stuff" of numbers. We group things and discover how they fall into patterns and hold certain properties in common. The recognition of patterns is a foundation not only of math but also of reading, language, science, music, and movement. In linking these various manifestations of pattern and rhythm, we are again cultivating flexibility, which lies at the heart of creativity.

Math offers its own perspective on the world. There are numerical relationships in the repeating pattern of a design, the symmetry of a snowflake, the rhythm of music, and the spiraling spines of a pine cone. These patterns, represented by claps and snaps, numbers, and letters in the kindergarten, will become patterned sequences of numbers. Still later it will be learned that the sequences can be generated by formulas and represented graphically by rose curves and parabolas.

It is important first to engage the children's imagination in the materials and create as many opportunities for discovery as possible. To allow the kids to involve themselves with the materials, I arrange a time for free exploration of what are intended as the "math manipulatives."

Building blocks offer a physical knowledge of proportion, balance, geometry, and the relationship of parts to wholes. On the table might be a basket of smaller pattern blocks—diamonds, hexagons, triangles, squares, and trapezoids proportionate to one another. Though two-dimensional block designs are nearby, the children are left to use the pieces as they choose. They discover they can build on a flat surface or that the pieces can be stood on edge to build towers of questionable stability.

Sometimes my role is to bite my tongue. For several days the kids had been exploring how high they could build their towers. My first impulse was to "expand their knowledge" by blurting out that triangles make very stable bases. I checked myself and asked if they could find a more stable base. With that aim in mind, a plethora of new techniques evolved. Instead of using the precarious narrow edge, the children began alternating "floors" and "walls" to create high rises, or stacking the pieces horizontally on their broad sides, making for sturdier but shorter zigzagging piles. In the end they



Carolien Stikker White Dress I, 1986, photograph.



Carolien Stikker *Statue Pointing*, 1987, photograph.

discovered a variety of aspects of height, balance, and stability.

There was a progression during the year from miscellaneous piles to designs and entire scenes that took into account the geometric properties of and relationships among pieces. One girl envisioned an entire fair, combining flat and three-dimensional constructions to fashion a haunted house and a pleasantly abstract merry-go-round. Certain days inspired outdoor scenes, with a tray as backdrop for flowers growing amid grass and butterflies. Once they'd fully explored the possibilities and had a working knowledge of the pieces, I found I could limit or refine what they did in order to enhance their explorations, and they accepted my suggestions willingly.

Math has its own symbolic language. We must allow the kids to become conversant with mathematical principles, draw them, and then write them, using the "alphabet" of mathematical sentencing and graphing. Mathematics compares, quantifies, and orders our



knowledge of the world. So we begin with *their* knowledge of the world, and cultivate the tools for analyzing it through mathematics.

Measuring is a mathematical tool taught to the children early in the program. We use the length of feet and hands as a standard measurement, creating a context for discovering the need of a more objective standard. We compare heights. We graph temperatures as a comparison of the lengths of the mercury measured each day. We count down to find the days remaining until Halloween; we count up to see how many people were born in the year of the dog.

Graphing offers another way to organize information and call attention to aspects that might otherwise be overlooked. For instance, the pet chart quantified which pets were most likely to be found in the home of a kindergartener. At the same time the children shared what animals were important to them. The discussion surrounding the chart evolved into Pet Week, during which we met many of the animals represented on the graph. This math lesson also allowed us to be of comfort to a sad and subdued boy when his dog, now familiar to us all, died later in the year.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

In the sciences I am again less concerned with imparting a specific body of knowledge than with helping the children develop a way of thinking, namely what we call scientific method. I introduce the elements of inquiry and testing and try to create situations that challenge the children's newly forming ideas about cause and effect. What is a reasonable test? What do we accept as proof?

The day we tackled melting, I asked the five-year-olds to predict what they thought might melt. Prediction created the opportunity for dissonance. Predicting required them to accommodate what they thought would happen to what did happen and to ponder why this was so. We tried ice, butter, crayons, wax, and cinnamon. Questions and opportunities for predictions arose along the way. Which will melt faster? Why? Which will solidify away from the heat? Which will stay melted? What other changes occurred as well? This excited further curiosity, experimentation, and observation.

Most gratifying is the evidence that the methodology has been internalized and can be applied spontaneously. Suddenly the rice and bean table, a fixture in the

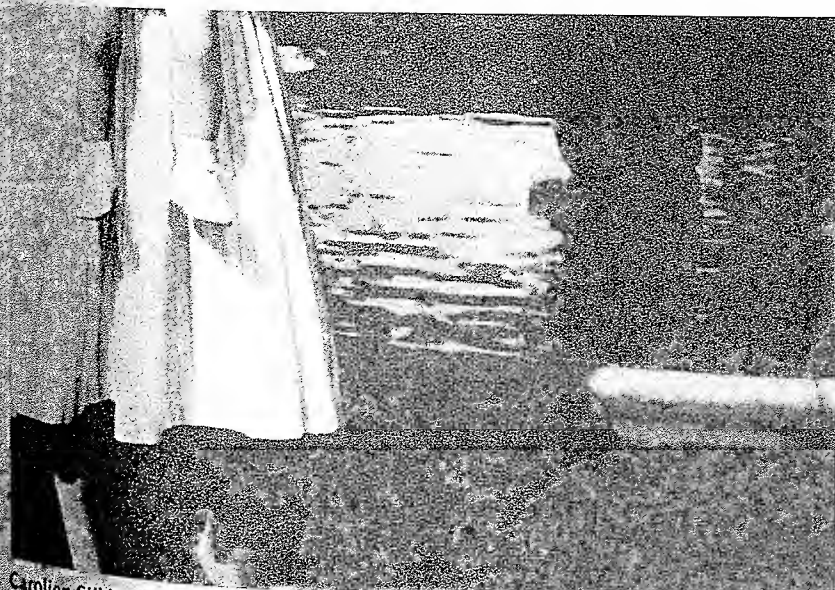
room all year, became the basis for experiments. "I want to add water to some rice and beans and see what happens." This girl's enthusiasm spread until several children had cups of rice, beans, and water. The diversity of their observations made for a rich overall picture. One child noted what floated and what sank, another observed that the skins of the beans eventually lifted and peeled. The first girl paid attention to the changes in the color and odor of the water. By the next morning we all found out that the combination creates molds if left overnight! In science the idea of mistakes is most easily eradicated because it is the so-called mistakes that teach us so much. The kids accept and view them positively as experiments, not errors.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Perhaps the area I find most compelling is the social sciences. Development is indicated by growth in empathy, respect, historical knowledge, and refined judgment. Children at this age are increasingly able to put themselves in another's shoes and must be challenged to do so. Empathy and concern must be valued within the fiber of the classroom. Animals and insects have played a major role in the kindergarten. Much of our discussion has circled around their dignity and rights



People often create an aura of innocence around children, and believe the preservation of this innocence will rid the world of its ills.



Carolien Stikker *Mother and Child*, 1987, photograph.

to, well, a life-style of their own choosing. The children have been slow to grant this at times.

Another example is the magic wand. One little girl brought in a blue plastic "magic wand," which she invested with the power to make wishes, both good and bad, come true. Her classmates seemed to accept this. An otherworldliness crept into her voice whenever she spoke of the wand. Several days later at rest time she left the room briefly. In her absence the others began to question her verity.

"It's not *really* a magic wand."

"I *know*, but she won't listen."

"It came with a My Little Pony!"

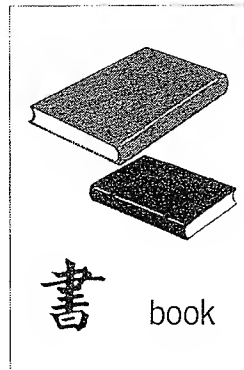
When she returned to the room they felt it their responsibility to confront her with Reality. She held firm, and it was then I intervened. I neither upheld nor denied the magic of the wand. That was not the point. I did affirm her right to believe. She did not have to prove her faith to them, nor did they need to disprove her to justify their own beliefs. I trust that she will not always invest blue plastic with superhuman power, but I don't want to inhibit the part of her that believes in a spirituality beyond the physical. And I want all the children to be able to trust their own judgment and not feel threatened by the existence of other beliefs. This is her seed of faith, and as in many new religions, spiritual strength is ascribed to an icon. It may not seem that a My Little Pony wand has a lot of social relevance, but it is just such small yet significant events that can reflect values and reveal issues basic to human experience.

Another issue that came up was the concept of war. The group was typically polarized, boys versus girls, until they were forced to contend with a common foe—the first/second graders. Among themselves they began to refer to this class as the Rats, implementing a time-tested method to dehumanize the enemy.

I applauded their cooperation with one another. But I sadly recognized that, as is so typical with humans, it was borne of the desire to be *against* someone or something else. Did they know what I was talking about? There were several nods. I pointed out that they would be living with those kids for perhaps five or six more years, and we could not afford to be at war with them. We briefly discussed the upcoming summit between world leaders and decided it was time for a treaty of our own. We wrote a lit of grievances, a plea to "stop the warring," and a suggested resolution. It was signed by all and sent to the first/second grade. This impressed the first/second grade, and they took up the concerns of the kindergarteners seriously. They came up with

their own list of rules for outside. Then we came together to exchange treaties and song. It was no cure-all; there are still problems of intimidation. But it was an important process in the search for alternatives in dealing with conflict.

It distresses me that we withhold or even lie to children in the name of protecting them from the "real world." People often create an aura of innocence around children and believe the preservation of this innocence will rid the world of its ills. But there is nothing more disillusioning than to discover that the fairy-tale world we've encouraged them to construct exists nowhere. We should protect children with honest information and by installing hope and faith in their ability to act and change their world. And there is no preservation of innocence; our culture—good and bad—is too embedded in a child's every experience. If we don't provide explanations and cultivate awareness, we are condemning them to perpetuate both the virtues and the evils of our history.



I know these children will be introduced to much of the mainstream through TV, books, and commercialization. So I tend to focus on the forgotten, omitted and intentionally distorted histories of our planet.

We spent most of November confronting the stereotypes of the wild Indian. By Thanksgiving I was pleased with how much they'd absorbed when they told the story back to me. But because these stories are sometimes in such conflict with what they've been led to believe, even at five, they must be introduced and repeated in numerous ways. When a Native American woman from the Speaker's Bureau came in January they were again doing a reality check. In one of their thank-you's, a boy asked her, "Did the white people really steal all the land from the Indians?"

I do not mean to destroy their love for their homeland. It was hard to accept that the army had traded smallpox-infected blankets to a tribe with the intention that they would all get sick and die. One boy commented, "Yeah, but they only did that once, right?" They so want to believe in their country, and they should. To me, patriotism requires looking honestly at our actions and condemning those acts that threaten our nation's professed ideals. We also fortify the children by studying the tradition of resistance, not the injustices alone. We learn how this resistance was embodied in the lives of Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

Finally, I am asking the five-year-olds to make a judgment on the basis of empathy, respect, and fact. I can't deny my influence, that of their parents, the toy manufacturers, and the media. However, we must provide opportunities for the kids themselves to exercise their ability to assess what is fair, what is right.

These ideas may be old, but I am saying them again. Revisionist educators would have us return to the methods and mythology of the "idyllic" one-room schoolhouse, the drilling of basic skills through rote recitation. They would have us believe that a highly structured 3-R's program is sufficient to meet the complexities of the lives of today's children. I beg to differ. It does not equip a child emotionally or cognitively; it does not respect the child. Though the structure appropriate for a given child will vary, it must not be adjusted at the expense of creativity, discovery, and dignity.

Gail Draper is currently teaching kindergarten in Los Angeles at the Oaks School, a private progressive school she helped found four years ago.

The Art of Education

JILL I
I am t
I said
becau
I get c
becau
and I
to pay
to spe
educa
And s
Do yo
Do yo
in grav
or out
things
Get ar
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We ha
Becau
And I
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And th
Listen
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This fil
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He sai
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Becau
It is alr
in this
And y
And I
Folks,
You be
where
with n
or mor
and all
And I s
Peter,
keeps
would
And he
You de
that is
You're
becaus
Jill Pic

I am tired of being angry
I said
because it's true
I get consumed with anger and cannot work
because it takes me over
and I didn't come to this fucking school
to pay fifteen thousand dollars a year
to spend all my time changing this place and not get any of my
education for all the money I spend

And she said
Do you think it's going to get easier?
Do you think that
in grad school
or outside of college
things will be different?
Get angry
she said
We have to keep fighting
Because we have to learn how to take care of ourselves

And I said
I am tired of the anger that won't let me work
because I get so frustrated

And they said
Listen, this is the way it was for us
and this is the way it's always been
and there is power in numbers
and organize yourselves

And I watched this film
of a woman licking a milk carton

and I said
This film offends me
and he said
That is just your perception of what is happening

He said
You had better think about why you want to be a filmmaker anyway
Because once you get out of school
it is almost impossible to work
in this medium because it is so expensive

And you are lucky if you get a grant to do your own work
And I don't mean to discourage you, but,
Folks,

You better take advantage of the time you have here
where you can do anything you want
with no time constraints
or money constraints
and all this equipment at your fingertips...

And I said
Peter, there is something wrong with this flatbed—the sound plate
keeps slowing down
would you please come and take a look at it?

And he said
You don't know what you are doing
that isn't even sound film
You're using the wrong stuff and it isn't my job to fix the flatbed
because I've never been trained to do this

Jill Pierce lives and works in San Francisco.

And I yelled
I am using the right film
So don't give me your goddamn attitude
And don't tell me I am doing it the wrong way

And I said to the man at the photo store
I would like to take a look at that Bolex—how much does it cost?
And he said \$200
And I said
That is an incredibly low price for a Bolex
I would like to shoot a roll and get it developed to see if there is
anything wrong with the camera

And I went back the next week with my film
to shoot a roll

And he said
That's not a 16mm camera, honey
that's a super-8 camera
and besides
you could never afford to shoot 16mm—
film and processing alone is \$40

And I wanted to say
you fuckhead
I know that's a 16mm camera
because I've been using one for two years
and film is \$12.95 a roll
and \$10.00 to process
and why the fuck do you think I work 50 hours a week
if it's not to afford to buy the fucking film

But I said, instead,
"Oh really?"
And I went outside and cried

I am tired of being angry
I said
because it's true
Because I get so frustrated that I can no longer remember
why I wanted to work in film
in the first place
But I am also tired of being condescended to and insulted and
ignored and being made to feel stupid

Get angry
she said
We have got to keep fighting

And I said to them
the Women's Film/Photo/Video Collective
is not a place for people to come and
expect help because they don't know what they are doing
it is a place for women to feel like they are not crazy because
they come into this goddamn building and immediately have to leave
because the air is so thick with hostility
that you can't breathe
and I am tired of feeling like a crazy person
because no one will answer my questions and
I begin to feel invisible

And I vowed to carry hedging shears with me every time I went into the
film building
and she said
"Bitches rule:"



Diane : I love you, Lilly.



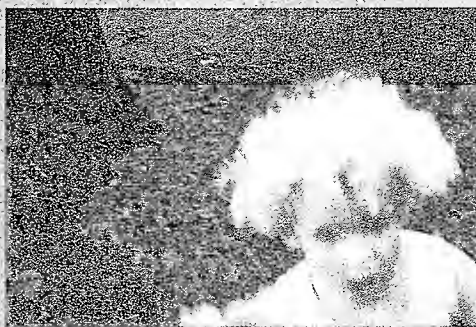
Lilly : I love you too, Mom.
I love trees. I love all
the trees in the world.



Diane : That's a lot of love.
I didn't know you had
that much love in you.



Lilly : Ya, for real.
I do, for real.



Lilly : Mom, I fell in love
with John.



Diane : You did? Did you fall
in love with me?



Lilly : No



Diane : You don't love me?



Lilly : I love you, but I didn't
fall in love with you.
But, know what?
I fell in love with Dad.

On Being An American Black Student

CLARISSA T. SLIGH



Clarissa T. Sligh *Kids Playing at the Gramercy Boys' Club Day Care Center in the South Bronx, 1984, photograph.*

I was a twenty-year-old black girl. It was spring in New York City. I had traveled by bus from southern Virginia. The colors were grey—the sky, the buildings, the sidewalks, the trees. It was Sunday morning. Only a few people were on the streets. I hoped I wouldn't get lost. My knuckles and jaws were tight.

I knocked on a door inside a small but well-kept midtown hotel. A young woman not much older than me peeped out. Thin and plain-looking, she had

blonde hair and blue eyes. She smiled and said, "Come in. You're just in time." There were several rooms. Leading me into one of them she said, "Make yourself comfortable," then left and returned with a guy who was also about my age. She told me his name and said they would interview me together for the international college student program. Their smiles did nothing to allay my fear or my nervous stomach.

"What is your opinion on American-Russian policy—?" they began. I never

heard the entire question. I knew I was in trouble. My mind began to flash newspaper headlines. I racked my brain trying to piece together a coherent stream of ideas. None would come. Despite patient smiles, their eyes told me my performance was disappointing. Their reality was not mine. I could not debate or discuss it. We clumsily made a few more nonconnecting exchanges before I went back to the streets of Manhattan.

Anger and disappointment welled up. I walked in a daze. I had traveled ten

hours to get there. In five minutes I learned what I had suspected all my life: that my education had prepared me to live only in an American "Negro world," not "the world." I felt my first great doubt about why I was studying so hard. If all that diligence was not going to pay off, why do it? Feeling alone with the humiliation and shame of that experience, I felt a new kind of fear and anxiety begin to take root. I was terrified that each succeeding encounter would reveal more of my vast ignorance of the white man's world. This is a story about how I was trained to take my American Negro female place.

We lived in a state that was racially segregated by law. My parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles often spoke quietly about events. They were afraid something awful would happen to us kids even before we grew up. As a young black child, before I could even think, I was told how bad things are out there in the world, how there's no place for us, how people don't like us.

Speaking my mind could get me killed. My own thoughts and feelings were secondary. My questions, curiosity, and enthusiasm had to be bridled. Learning this would help me survive. I was often told: "Shut up!"; "Who asked you your opinion?"; "Who said so?"; "You don't know what you're talking about!"; "Mind your own business!"

They felt that the sooner I learned to speak only when spoken to and to say no more than I had to, the better it was going to be for me. It was a fear, a silence put into me—and most black kids—to prepare us, to toughen us up for the real world like soldiers for war. I learned to respond with words that had double meanings and with a rhythm and pace that could change or modify any message I was trying to get across.

Yet my parents had hopes that adulthood would be better for us than it had been for them. I was sent to kindergarten at age five. The teacher, a friend of my parents, made learning and school seem like a lot of fun. Because of that I

looked forward to attending elementary school, but what I found was incredibly boring. At age six I knew that the teacher, who was black, did not care about most of us. I can't remember her ever showing delight in anything I did. So much had to do with just sitting there, just serving time.

Our first "lesson" was to sit down and be quiet. Our second lesson was to memorize the pledge of allegiance to the flag. We did not understand what any of the words meant. Being taught to perform like trained dogs, we were given stars and A's when we were good; if we could not perform, we were ridiculed and punished. When the teacher's punishment did not work, our parents were called in. We were learning to behave, not to question or to think.

Most of what I was taught in school seemed foreign to my life at home. Learning to read from the Dick-and-Jane readers I thought, This must be how white children play. These standard American public school readers were published from 1935 to 1965. They presented the American family as well-to-do, northern European Caucasian Christians leading trouble-free lives. Along with the mythical ideals of owning-class European culture, the message I got from my black teachers was that something was wrong with us if we were too different: skin too dark, hair too short or too kinky, dress too colorful, talk too loud.

I learned to be ashamed of who I was. Slowly and laboriously we read each word in *Little Black Sambo*, a book still being published today. Even though we were six and seven years old, we knew the story made fun of us in a cruel and demeaning way. Is this supposed to be some kind of joke? I thought as I examined the teacher's face to get a clue. I could see she was seriously trying to teach us to read.

In fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade history and geography classes, we learned about the bravery of American whites and about European imperialism, slavery, and the "dark continent." One week a year,

pictures of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver were brought out. This was supposed to make us feel proud, but we either fell asleep or tuned out.

Elementary school had additional pitfalls. Fights often began on the playground and on the way home from school. I now see that those fights were dramatizations of feelings of jealousy, indignation, frustration, rage, and despair. I was glad I was not the teacher's pet, though none of us really escaped. As victims of invalidation we acted out our distress patterns on one another in the only "safe" place we had; in the schoolyard we practiced turning on ourselves and our schoolmates. The seeds of internalized racism sprouted as we learned to hate, fear, and mistrust one another.

When it was time to go to junior high school, I rode on a school bus past neat and well-equipped white schools to a small, dilapidated black school. My older brothers had been sent away to a better school. I felt my parents did not care much about my education because I was a girl. I didn't like going there at all, and although we never spoke of it, the other black kids didn't like it either. The bus trips were often tense and unruly. We knew ours was the worst school in the county. During the ride, a handful of kids dominated the rest of us by playing "the dozens"—talking about everybody's mother in a negative way and putting one another down. This was part of learning how to survive. If you could not do it, you had to fight or silently withstand humiliation. You also learned to hide your feelings by being "cool" or to disguise them by being "tough."

Inside the classroom the teachers urged us to study. Most of us felt it wasn't going to make a difference in our lives. We had learned that our way of talking which expressed our experiences, was not a legitimate language, that our way of singing and playing music was not a legitimate musical expression, and that our way of being in the world was seen as uncouth. We saw how our people had to behave and talk differently "out there," to "smile and shuffle" in order to

on and brought us feel r tuned
onal pit- ie play- e from its were busy, in- despair- er's per- l. As vic- our dis- the only oolyard, lves and internal- arned to iother- nior high past near ools to a .ool. My away to a s did not 1 because g there a oke of it e it either e and un- rst school a handful of us by about e way and is was part you could ently with- med to hok r to disgust

"get over." We did not know the smiles were meant to hide the fear.

Those of us who showed ability coupled with willingness to pay attention were pushed by our teachers. They preached that we owed it to our race to prepare ourselves to go to college. They guided us into courses

ing in a white woman's kitchen. She was a domestic worker and dreaded this possibility. However, I had to be very careful to try not to be too smart. It was just one more thing to isolate me further from the other students. Being from a poor family, I could not afford the new clothes, junk jewelry, and junk food most of the students felt were important. They were trying to have fun now:

enroll their children in white schools but were turned away. Almost overnight, however, our rundown school was painted. A gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, and chemistry lab were added, and a new principal with a crew of young black teachers brought in. Students who could not see the handwriting on the wall were suspended from school, most of them never to return.



Clarissa T. Sligh *Kids Playing at the Gramercy Boys' Club Day Care Center in the South Bronx, 1984, photograph.*

that would prepare us for technical jobs in fields with worker shortages. It was a test of memory, of concentration, and of willingness to study and repeat the ideas from the textbooks and teachers without debate or discussion. To them it did not matter what we might want to do. We were told they knew what was best for us.

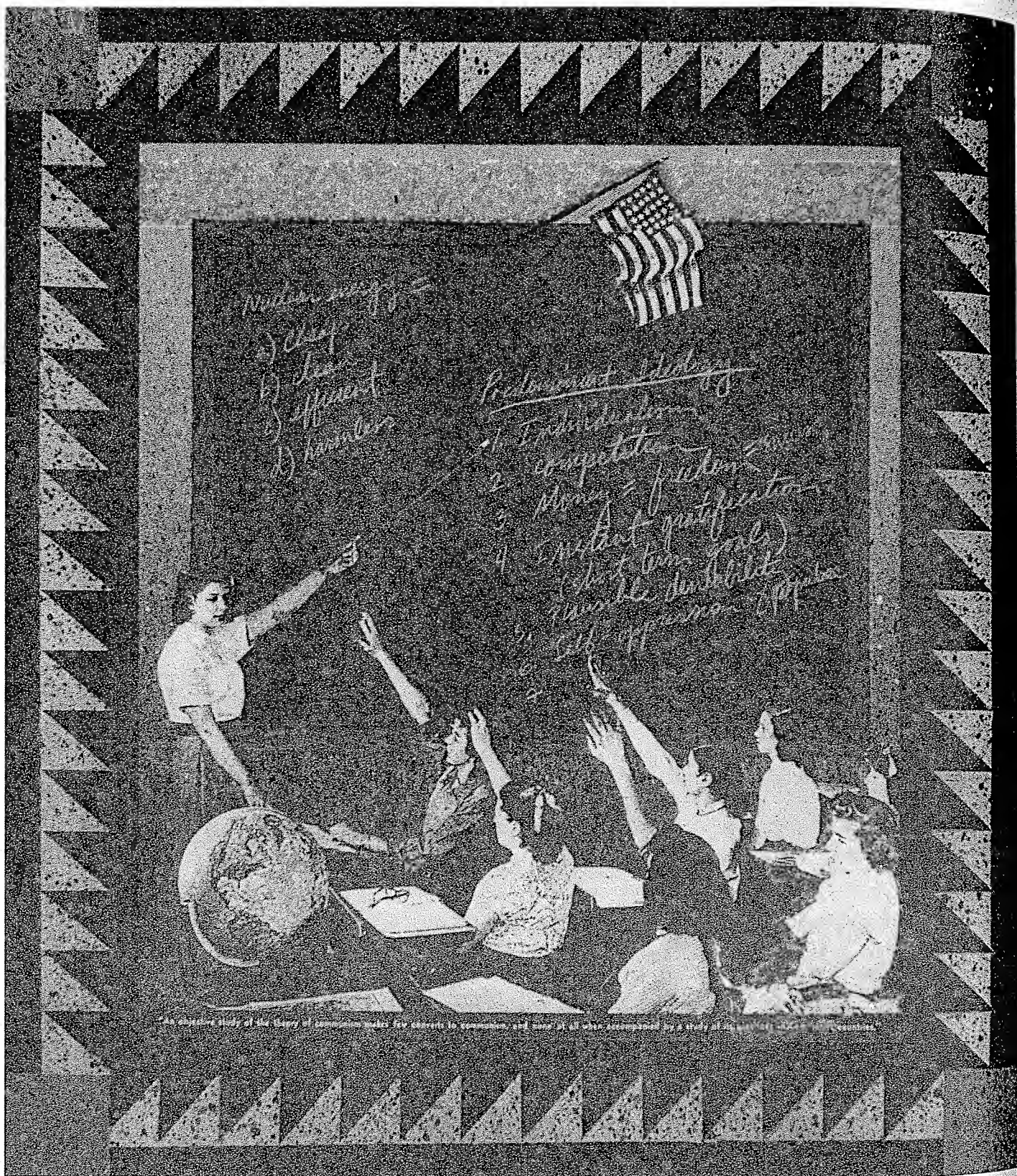
It wasn't easy to decide to be a good student, but my mother always threatened that if I didn't study and get a scholarship to college, I would end up work-

life after high school seemed hard for black people, an end to the freedom we enjoyed at the moment.

At the same time, I learned from my father that being a black female was more problematic than being a black male. I longed to grow up and be on my own. Before that was to happen, the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling that "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional was to change our lives and test us even more. Some black parents immediately tried to

Every few months we were tested, and our test scores were published and discussed by everyone. The county board of education said it showed we would never survive in white schools and that we were better off where we were. But our parents knew our separate facilities were not equal and would not give up their efforts.

When black kids integrated the white schools, black parents and teachers told us we would have to work really hard to prove ourselves. The white teachers



Kristin Reed *Predominant Ideology*, 1988, krypton, xerox, gouache, chalk, 12"x14".

Kristin Reed is a painter, muralist, and graphic artist living and working in NYC.

didn't say anything to us or about us; it seemed nothing was good enough for them. When we did something we thought was better, they tried to act as though it hadn't happened. We quickly arrived at an understanding of the fact that there was no room for us inside white schools. Our blackness—the thing that had always made us so visible—now made us disappear.

But our parents were determined that we would stay. To them, abuse was just taken for granted. They would tell us that if we got the same training as white students and worked twice as hard, the world would see our talents and oppor-

sources of strength. Those of us who couldn't make the shift fast enough failed a number of times, but those who kept trying became almost unstoppable.

My first college was a black school in southern Virginia. I got a scholarship to major in the sciences but yearned to be a student in the art department. I had difficulty appreciating the administration's efforts to "civilize" us. Gloves, dresses, and hats were a Sunday requirement. We even had lessons in how to behave at an afternoon tea. We were required to attend ballet and classical music perfor-

self through the eyes of people who are different from you. I hadn't realized that my efforts to hide behind the facade of an educated person did a lot of damage to the young black girl I was. When people refuse to see you, who you are begins to slip away and you start to feel you don't exist. I find that trying to express my real voice in my work often causes tremendous conflict, not only within other people's expectations, but within myself as well.

Despite the difficulties, the terrible silence of isolation forces me to continue to try to con-



Tomie Arai *Chinatown*, 1989, silkscreen, 22"x30". Photo: D. James Dee.

Tomie Arai is an artist living and working in NYC. The pieces reproduced here are part of a series entitled "Memory in Process" — prints based on interviews of Asian American mothers and daughters. This project was made possible by a residency from NYSCA.

tunities would open up.

However, our white classmates picked up our white teachers' cues. They tried not to see what was going on. As our isolation mounted, we could not name what was happening to us, but we knew how it felt. When we tried to speak of it, we were asked, "What are you talking about?" and by our silence we hid our anger at the distortion of our identity and the exclusion of our reality. We didn't realize it at the time, but in order to cope, we searched for new ways of being in the world, began to draw on new

mances given by white groups brought in from elsewhere. Only slowly did this school become a little more relaxed.

Years later in art school I painted my white models red, blue, or green. Usually my white instructors said nothing, but occasionally one would say, "That's not the way you do it!"—meaning that was not the way to make art. But for me, art had to express how I saw, felt, and thought.

It was only much later that I began to understand what it meant to grow up in a culture where you learn to see your-

nect with others. Sometimes white people say to me, "You must be very exceptional!" I have learned this is a way of rationalizing that somehow I must not really be black. I know this is no acceptance at all. When I try to point this out, the response is usually, "What are you talking about?" There we go making nonconnecting exchanges again. This time I know it is not caused by some failing on my part.



Clarissa T. Sligh, national coordinator of Coast to Coast: Women of Color Artists' Projects, is an artist living in New York City.

Welcome to You See

CAROL FEISER LAQUE

Welcome to Xerox University.
Lie down on the glass plate
and magically the Phallic bar
of light comes over and under
you, passing through your mind
like Star Whores. Pay your
tuition and duplicate the Phallic
bar of light, so one thousand good
replications becomes your tuition
or reimbursement which is being
Xeroxed into a Diploma, symbolizing
that learning and the key to success
is being Xeroxed and duplicated
precisely as liberally and as artistically
as the reductions or enlargements of the
blankness of a piece of white paper.
If you're a white woman the
bar of light passes over you
bumping twice over your breasts—
no big deal. A man, however, faces
one large bump, his greatest
Psycho-Sexual crisis, and he is
Xeroxed, but becomes a god in
the process. In this case a
Phallus is Xeroxed into Erectus—
a phallusy (see). But that
phallacy is em Bossed with Power
Politics, indicating whoever will rise
to the top will be a Psychopath of the
Old Boys' School, putting cream that
rises to the top in your coffee from the
creamatorium in your always erect
mind. There is no Phallus for all of
us Interruptus. I'm an English teacher,
so I was born with rabies and a
red pen in my first. I came out
totally Red at birth and turned to
blue because my obstetrician was
Major Medical; she has four stars.
His Storians now call themselves
Psycho (tick, tock) His Storians,
Psychotic His Storians will control
the Truth. Just like Freud, I am
unafreud and jung again like
the Psychology Department. They teach
Abnormal and Child Psychology which
is why they act like abnormal children

which is "normal" I became an
English teacher born with rabies and
a red pen. Freud looked away from
Oedipus and wrote the Ode to Pussy Wrecks
Complex without tearing out Jocasta's
Antigones or me the Sphinx.
The highest degree I ever attained
at You See is 104. I got a
Doctorate and passed the test
for my Poetic License. I've always
been driven. My life is never in
danger from free speech at a
fascist, totalitarian, appropriate
University because of my Religion.
I believe in Blue Cross and Blue
Shield. I chose it because it
matches my eyes. 104 is also
the IQ necessary to be Xeroxed
into a Doctorate. You also
have to trade your humanity
for a license to be a rabies
babies hunting madly for
someone to bite. You see?
Or you Nazi? If you can
afford to go to a prestigious
university east, south, west,
or north of here, you will be
Xeroxed and enlarged and embossed
at the same time. And your
genitally correct organs will be bronzed—
just as language the only organ
outside the body will be stainless
steel, polysyllabic, and exclusionary.
As an English teacher born with
rabies and a red pen, I
will teach all students from
The Bible of Truth and Scholarship
which no one comprehends and which
is voted and amended by consensus
morality, consensus reality, consensus
justice, consensus prejudice, consinsus
pathology, which will be voted on
weekly by the majority of psychopaths
who rule. The book I am writing
is called *The Sayings of Chairman
Meow*. I call my self chair
man because to stay in power I will
lie, cheat, steal, play both sides against
the middle, speak so nobody understands
me and call them stupid, be vicious
only behind backs, be nodding and smiling
all the time performing in the best tradition
of the old boys' school of emotional butchery.

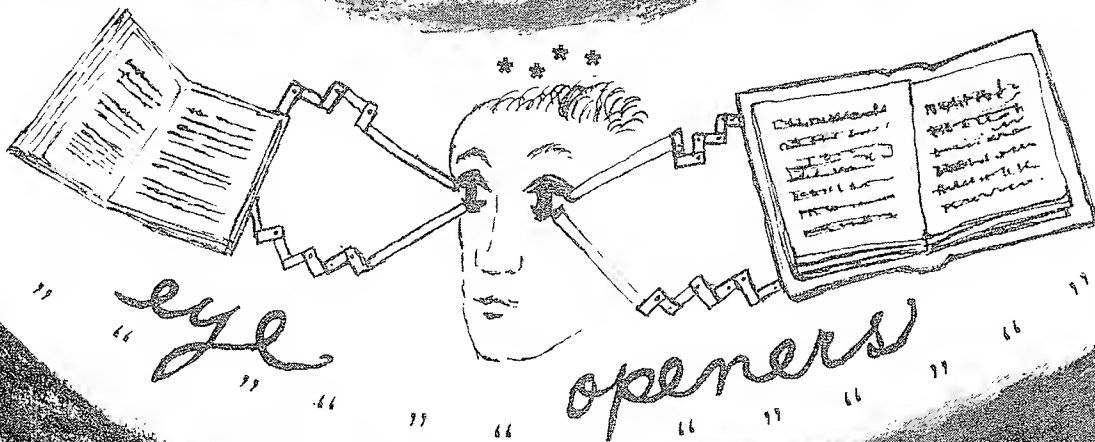
Trench mind, trench mouth manipulation
to win at all costs. I say I must
be a chairman because I am a
hermaphrodite—all that any man could
destroy. No one can touch me or
Major Medical who has four stars
will call the Boys at Affirmative
Action. Twenty-five committees will
be established concerning the Manifest
Destiny, Psycho-affective, Dangling
Modifiers of my genitalia, and
I will demand the same xenophobia
extended to all women, Jewish people,
Blacks, Migrant workers, Mormons, Seventh
Day Adventists, used-car salespersons,
Aluminum Siding As Concrete Art, etc.
The Sayings of Chairman Meow
illustrates that if you are a tomcat
you spray your way to success, marking
territory like follow the Yellow Brick
Path of logic to pathology. If you
are anything else, you let the Yellow
Brick Wall of man's inhumanity to man
turn viscous—homocidal because
the stakes of academe are so small—and
destroy feeling for the sake of
power, disintegrity. Since I's a
hermaphrodite (also spelled Herm Aphro
Dike) nobody harms Me for fear
I'll take my pants down and show
them everything they are not but who
the freaks really are in life.
It's called mooning—both sides
of all four phases. I am
a radical feminist, so I recognize
women can be terrorists too. I
believe in excellent teaching, publications,
humanity for all students and faculty
alike. I'm a hermaphrodite out
for all the gentle men and women
body spirits—look at my
body, hear my words, and
shudder in terror at who
we label freak and why.
I am not alone as I
am the Sphinx, a stone poem:
meow. One word says
everything. I have more than Nine Lives
because I am desert and ocean
under the milkyway—I am
alive on fire. The decision
to be humane is made every
day of your life.

Carol Feiser Laque was born in San Francisco in 1944 and had 19 homes before she was 21.

if u cn rd ths



Don't Do It.
Don't Open Those Books.
Words are treacherous,
Meanings unstable.



I used to be an average
joe. But now that books
have opened my eyes I've
become a paranoid neurotic
who can't sleep and can
no longer relate to people
spontaneously.
Just say
No.

LEARN TO EARN!

Wye

Pamela Wye Learn to Earn, 1988, pen and ink.

Pamela Wye is a New York City artist and writer. She most recently exhibited drawings in a group exhibition at Emily Sorkin Gallery and writes for ARTS magazine.

to submit to the Myth Education issue, ~~it~~ if its not too late,
otherwise to this one, under theme of men on the job.

Dear Professor Vile
Department of Unamerican Activities
State University of Noo Jerk

Dear Professor Vile:

I can't thank you enough for the precious
guidance you gave me in graduate school. From the moment
I walked into the department, I was pressured in the direction
of studying the hula and particularly the bar scene although
my interest in field work in Hawaii was in Music and song. Ac-
cording to sexual harassment laws discussed recently at a
graduate school conference, you violated me on several accounts.
First, lewd language, saying over the phone "I wish I could ~~see~~ *see*
you shake those hips." ~~and making~~ when I was doing field work.
And making a remark after you missed my concert: "I would have
come if I had known it was Anon and her Blonds..." ^a After you
found out indirectly who had been my ushers. Second, leering at
my breasts; third, showing me a ~~girl~~ ^{girl} picture and touching
me on the thighs and kissing me on the lips. Et cetra. Et cetra.

Needless to say, this made me afraid to go to professional organi-
zations and conferences; end of career, or that one.

Consequently, and subsequently, I found myself faced with a lot
of bills. I answered an ad for exotic dancers; I saw in a news-

paper, I found myself saying, yah, I studied the ~~max~~ hula,
why not. The only way I could do it was to ^{take} ~~take~~ my glasses
off and sing. Slowly I was tuned in to what was going on. One
man subtly gave me a two dollar tip to shut my mouth. On
the break, another (blond) girlie dancer (you would have liked
her) clued me in: I was to slink around and open my legs for
a dollar when a man came to the bar...

Although I hate you every minute I was doing it, for blocking
my entry into one career and sliding me into this one, it
finally put your sexual pressure of me and your pressure to
study the bar scene into perspective.

Thanks a lot, Professor. I feel more power when I am behind
the bar getting a dollar a shot that when under your ~~xxx~~ con-
tinuous subtle and indirect pressure.

Women used to dance erotically and together in blocks of two
hundred, ~~as I learned in the research~~; colonized and isolated
under patriarchy, I guess not.

Anon E Mus

Stoo Dent

- 2 -

"I was actually born in Sausalito," the Kid says. "In '66, on a houseboat. My dad was an artist, called himself Peter Saturn. Even us kids don't know his real name. He used to go to Volunteers of America and Goodwill and the Sally Army and get this great stuff and stick it all together and display it on the beaches. My mom left him when I was three. She took me, my older sister, the orange cat, and a vase of peacock feathers which somebody later told her were bad luck."

He pauses. He's got a paisley bandanna tied round his wrist and a silver feather hanging from his ear. He's stopped me in the hall even though classes don't start till next week, and I am clearly impatient. He fiddles with the bandanna and studies my face with his gray-green eyes. You can't help but notice him. The eyes and something prematurely ironic in his face, they draw you.

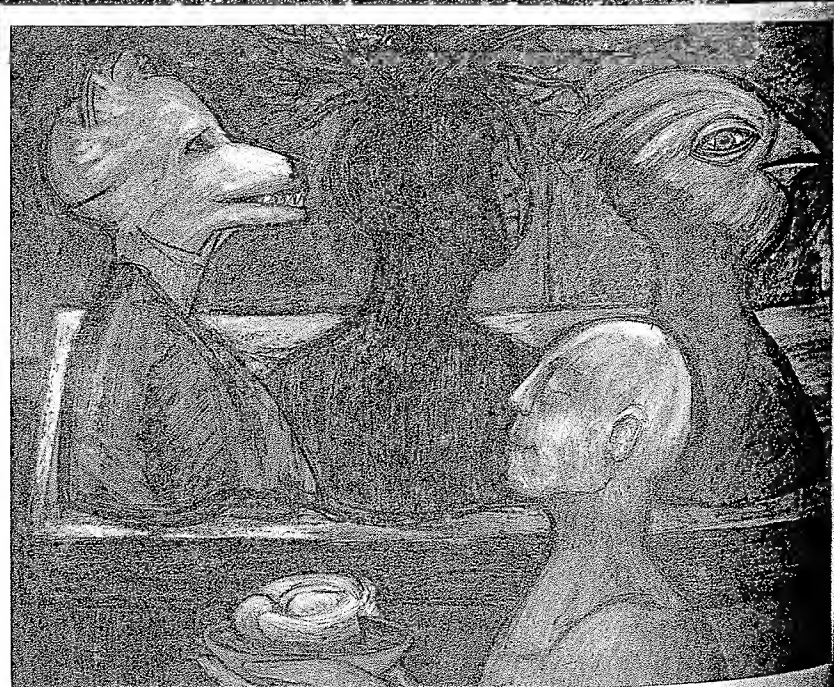
"Write it down," I say. He bows and leaves.

He's there the next week. On time. Holding his printout as though it were a ticket to something magical, something more filled with possibility than I know this seminar to be. Creative Writing 1. All over the country someone like me is sitting down with someone like him, one of us filled with resignation, the other filled with what must feel like a beginning. His classmates straggle in. They must have heard about me. Most of them are on time. And they are looking sharp: B.R. and Esprit and L.A. Kicks and denim jackets that somebody has washed in a vat of stones. I can't quite figure out why the Kid is the only one with dark hair when the class list holds a Ramirez and a Yazzie.

They are about to be surprised. They are about to discover that I don't have an opinion on the governor and Martin Luther King, that I don't give a damn if they saw *The Color Purple*, and that though my son is named Bobby and my daughter Angela, I am resigned to living in a decade when the original of the aforementioned Bobby has been featured in an article in the New York Times Business Section on barbecue magnates. Indeed, I let my hair do its do, and yes, my butt is big and I refuse to give up dashikis because they make little of what's big. They are going to discover that they will call me Ms. and that I am not particularly eager for them to know my first

What They Write About in Other Countries

MARY SOJOURNER



Nancy Wells *The Offering*, 1988, watercolor, crayon on vinyl, 36 1/4"x28 1/4"

Painter, printmaker, and sculptor Nancy Wells has been seriously involved in making art for the last thirty years. She is currently teaching teachers to teach art at the School of Visual Arts and also teaches printmaking at the Bob Blackburn Printmaking Workshop. She lives and works in Jersey City and New York City.

name, much less use it. It's all going to be less predictable than they might have guessed coming through that door for the first time—if, in fact, they bothered to guess at all.

The Kid gives me a funny look. "Are you alright?" he asks, and I safely tuck him away in my E-Z file: this kid is Pure California. Mom's assertive. There are books lying around the house, which has huge windows, the windows hung with little stained-glass symbols of things hopeful, things mystical, things preached about in the Unitarian Church Mom surely attends. The books have titles that indicate that men do not much like women but that women can do many things about that. The Kid and Mom were somewhere special on those summer days when something was supposed to harmonize or converge.

"I am fine," I say to all of them and smile my smile that I have learned to do, the one that involves only the lower half of the face, the smile that is cliché and judgment in itself. "And I am Ms. Green and this is Creative Writing I, and it is my hope that we will surprise each other before the end of the semester."

A skinny redhead to the Kid's left raises her hand. I'm afraid she has managed to mismanage her frizzy hair into dreadlocks. She has even wrapped four little braids with colored yarn. It must have required the kind of stoned concentration that only a dedicated follower of Jah could sustain. She is wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt with a skull silk-screened across the bosom. I can't bring myself to check her feet, to see if she's wearing those thick German sandals that make everybody's feet ugly. I nod.

"Will we read some Third World writers?" she asks.

The silvery-blond young man who's just come in the door glances at her, glances at me, smiles carefully, and settles into the desk in the farthest corner of the room. He's already bored. I can tell because he pulls out one of those hundred-dollar Daily Life Plan books and begins leafing through. The Kid is watching me intently.

"I don't care what you read," I say. "I care what you write." She blushes, the pink washing up behind her freckles. I pull the first class assignment out of my old briefcase. Angela, my daughter, wishes I would get rid of it, the briefcase. She says it's ostentatiously po' folks. She wishes I would get my hair cut and buy some new clothes and realize that the old days are nothing but old. She's living in D.C. with her husband. He's going to Howard. She sends the pictures of the two of them, of their townhouse, of

the Akita they have named Patrice. They do look good. All of them. She reminds me it's different now. When I visit, she takes me to wonderful restaurants where they serve black-eyed peas garnished with cilantro and spoonbread hot with chiles. She laughs when she tells me that Eldridge has designed a line of men's pants.

"You will write," I say, "for next class on the theme of your summer vacation." The redhead looks worried. Bored writes my words, maybe, down in his Life Plan. The Kid laughs.

"Alright," he says. "Alllllllright!"

I realize that in the excitement I have forgotten to take attendance, so I do. The redhead's name is Rain. Bored is Toby. The Kid won't tell us his first name. Must run in the family, that hip coyness. All the print-out says is "Saturn, N." In addition to these three, there are two Jennifers, one of whom is dressed from barrette to ankle boots, in sherbet yellow. There are Corey and Chris, Lupe and a Farrah Fawcett look-alike named Debby Yazzie. Steve and Rick and Jon and Randy all have perfect haircuts and wear jams in terrible colors. There are two no-shows. I encourage those present to leave early. The Kid hesitates at the door, checks out the set of my shoulders, and leaves.

Next class, the two no-shows show. They've even done the assignment. One of the no-shows, a tiny woman in a very large shirt, develops an immediate and obvious case of something for Toby and spends the entire class carefully ignoring him. He is busy with his Life Plan and a calculator. I read them an early story by Doris Lessing and when I call on him, he gives me a gorgeous warm smile and says he's sorry but he drifted off for a minute.

The other no-show is dressed all in beige: cotton shirt and sweater and pants and shoes that have an unusual, in my view, number of flaps and snaps and loops. He himself is also in beige: hair, skin, eyes, eyelashes, even the fine fuzz on his arms. The Kid stares at him. Those orbs of his, they seem to eat up everything—hungry, shining, long-lashed, gray-green holes in space. He's got a funny almost-sweet smile, like he can't quite believe what he seems to see.

My Angela comes to mind. I remember shopping with her in Tucson. We'd stuffed ourselves on tamales and were walking in that big airy mall. She plunked down on a bench near the fountains and started people-watching. That's her favorite pastime next to talking trash about what she watches. She shakes her head as they parade by, the young ladies in aerobics gear, the poor souls in Bermuda shorts,

the college kids who appear to have been computer-drawn and die-cut.

"Why do they try?" my child says. "Why do white people even try?" She hauls herself up from the bench, eyelids drooping, every muscle in her body declaring great weariness. "I swear, Mama," she says, "I've got to get me one of those big old gourmet chocolate chip cookies just to stand this mess." That's how we are, my child and her mother. Cookies. Social commentary. Declarations. Of difference, of kinship, of love.

The Kid taps the beige one on the arm and smiles. "David Byrne, I presume?" he asks.

"No," the beige one says nicely. "My name is Mark. I think you've mistaken me for someone else."

The room has gotten awfully quiet, so I run on for a while about Lessing and how she can make you feel a place and how they might want to think about how she does that and then do it. Next assignment, I want them to make me want to visit someplace they treasure in their memory.

"Does it have to be real?" Rain asks.

The Kid is studying me again. I start to move down the aisle to pick up their work. Rain has woven some feathers into her braids. She touches them nervously as I approach her seat.

"I'm sorry," she says in her high little voice. "That was a dumb question. I didn't think. Really. I'm bummed." She starts to hand me her paper and ducks her head.

"If you can make me want to be there, honey," I say, "I don't care how you got there." I tuck her assignment into the pile in my hand. It's on notebook paper. The child has handwritten it. She has dotted her i's with little circles.

That night I spread their work out on the cleared surface of the old roll-top desk that takes up most of the living-dining room. It had been my grandpa's desk. Some of the cubbyholes still smell like his old sweater...snuff, pencil lead, the salve my grandma

used to brew up to spread on his bony old chest when he had the catarrh. I've got a big mug of milk and molasses. She knew that, too. Long before the scientists and the ladies' magazines started telling us, she knew that milk and sugar would make you sleep good. A little rum doesn't hurt. That's my discovery. Milk and molasses for sleep. Rum for the emptiness.

"Make you sleep good..." Angela says I'm trying to talk down home when I say stuff like that. She's never forgiven me for growing up in Evanston, for her grandpa being a dentist, for me having no trouble getting into a good school, earning a good degree, getting a mediocre job. She keeps wanting to know about her roots, the real ones. Milk and molasses. Some hymns. Greens and ham hocks with lots of black pepper. Remembering my mama's church clothes, the print dresses, the fine sharp hats, the white gloves, the brooch, not gaudy, but real gold shining against her shoulder, I tell her about that. And me, that too, standing politely outside the dime store on Fifty-third Street on an August day, that Chicago stockyards soot hanging in the wet air, me dressed in a tasteful skirt and blouse, staying calm, keeping my eyes carefully focused over the customers' shoulders while they read my sign, while they walk away or shake my hand or spit at my feet. It worked. A year later, anybody could buy a bad hamburger anytime in an Atlanta lunch counter.

Rain's handwritten sheets are on the top of the pile. She has gone to every Grateful Dead concert in the Southwest in the summer of '87 and she wants me to know of the righteous, the totally unbogus vibes of those concerts. She wants me to know that there are people at those concerts who are almost old, there are men with gray braids, there are Black people and Chicanos. The Dead let anybody make tapes off their soundboards. Twice there were rainbows. Once, at Red Rocks, it rained right at a part in the song where it talks about rain. The Dead want one world...hey, a concert is one world...that's what they want, like Bob

Marley. I add grade 1. She's g. Ethiop ordina the pur Leon, n me, an room v papers. able to him nig he had warmir shit. Do Toby chrome two hu in his ti him cra right th the win of it. Sl body ta one—t the ran paragra I pull grade: (running teach d The c kids' ca river-run Kid's p stained out. He up old early Le I read t

I MET A MAN



WHO KNOWS HE KNOWS...

by Nancy Wells

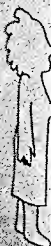


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I met a man who KNOWS HE KNOWS

Ikno



old ch...
 ag of mil...
 before...
 telling us...
 you sleep...
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Marley, Peter Tosh, like all those dudes. Jah!

I add a little more rum to the milk. I don't want to grade these things. I correct all the spelling errors. She's got the hard ones right, like Rastafarian and Ethiopia and synchronicity. It's the small words, the ordinary ones she can't handle. I start to play with the punctuation and lose heart. My children's father, Leon, my ex-husband, he had teased me, then nagged me, and finally gotten so he'd just slip out of the room when he found me muttering over their poor papers. It was only one of the ways we had not been able to keep it—what, keep it kind? I still think of him nights like this, because at least when I was done, he had been in there, asleep, his fine-boned body warming the bed. Uh-uh! I will not give in to that shit. Done is done.

Toby has written a cool, tight, tense, polished chrome and enamel, nasty little jewel on Europe on two hundred dollars a day. He hasn't missed a trick, in his travels, in his style. I give him an A-. It'll drive him crazy. Debby Yazzie starts off slow, then gets me right there, on her grandma's ranch, in the dust and the wind and the mutton broiling on the wood-fire of it. She's got a problem with paragraphs—somebody taught her to put exactly four sentences in each one—but she gets me to smell the juniper, the dust, the rank fat perfume of the mutton. I clean up the paragraphs and give her a B+.

I pull Rain's paper back out and give her a double grade. C for writing, B for politics. That'll bring her running. If I've got to hold office hours, I may as well teach these kids to debate. Not dialogue. Debate.

The others do the predictables: Puerto Penasco, kids' camp, Volunteer in the Parks, back-packing, over-running, scooping it out at Baskin Robbins. The Kid's paper is last. The Kid's papers. I open the stained envelope and a wad of paper cutouts falls out. He's read Burroughs. He knows Dada. He's cut up old Patti Smith lyric sheets and thrown in some early Leroi Jones for good measure. There's more. If I read the mess right, he's spent the summer as a

male hustler or a French sailor or a Manhattan litter box. The word "spike" appears frequently and I can't tell if it's slang for syringe or an inadequate male organ. He's poured ink on some of the sections and labeled the blotch "random censor."

I find myself saying "Have mercy" out loud and invoking with the last sip of warm milk, now fume-y with rum, the puzzled ghost of my grandma. I fail the Kid. "See me soon," I write, and go to bed.

They are puzzled, surprised, disappointed. I know how they feel. Writing what have been described as "elegant, somewhat detached" essays, I more often than not open an envelope and let a rejection slip drop out onto my grandpa's desk. And now and then I sit with my sleeping potion and let it rest on my tongue and, even sweeter, let the printed page I hold in my hands rest in my mind. "June Jordan: Plain Talking" by Antoinette Green. I sleep the good sleep of the worker on those nights. So when they glance at the last page of their papers and let their eyes rest briefly on my face, with pleasure, with petulance, I know how it is.

Later they come to my office, that small room with no window, that neat room without posters, without clues. I sit in the straight-backed library chair and I listen. Toby is charming. He mentions Paris Review and his hope of being a successful novella-ist. He waits for me to appreciate the joke. I smile. He talks vaguely of Ralph Ellison and the tyranny of print. He leaves with his A- intact. I've brought an apple and yogurt for lunch. In the silence, the solitude, they taste clean.

I smell patchouli. Rain follows her scent. She pulls her paper from her peasant bag and sets it on the desk.

"I wonder," she says, "like I was kind of bummed, no big deal, really, but hopefully we could talk about my grade?"

Her nails are bitten to the quick and very clean. She tucks her feet up under her and perches on the

I KNOW, I KNOW
 I KNOW, I KNOW
 I KNOW
 I KNOW



EXCUSE ME SIR...
 WHAT IS IT YOU KNOW?



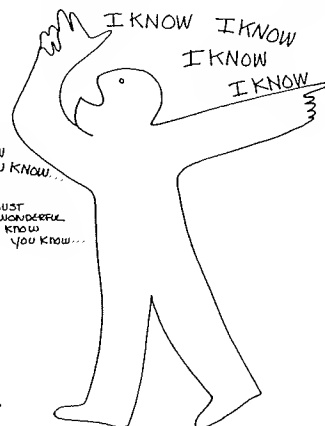
I KNOW I KNOW
 I KNOW I KNOW



I WISH I KNEW
 WHAT YOU KNOW...
 IT MUST
 BE WONDERFUL
 TO KNOW
 YOU KNOW...



I KNOW I KNOW
 I KNOW
 I KNOW



chair. I know that any minute she will hunker forward and hug her knees. I wrap the apple core in my napkin and toss it in the wastebasket. She unwinds and leans toward the basket.

"I can use that for my compost," she says, "I mean, like if you don't mind?"

"No," I say, "hopefully it'll be good for your garden." I feel a mean little charge in my gut and surprise her and myself by apologizing.

"I'm sorry," I say. She looks eager and puzzled. "Rain," I say, "you don't use *hopefully* that way. You can say 'I hope' or 'one hopes,' but if you are serious about this course, you will not use *hopefully* in that way. *Hopefully* is an adverb: 'She said *hopefully*.' Something like that."

She mentions another instructor and points out that he uses it all the time.

"He's wrong," I say and try, again, to tell her why. She gets confused. She's not real sure what an adverb is. I realize she has no foundation, and I start to think of language in just that way, as a shelter, as a structure, as a home. I imagine a new essay and forget her for a minute. She pokes around in her big bag and pulls out a bandanna. She wipes her eyes. I realize she is crying.

"I'm bummed," she says. "I've got so much inside and I can't get it out so other people can hear. Like my mom," she says, "I go home and I play the Red Rocks tapes and I try to show her some things I wrote about them, about the Dead. I mean, she's your age, right, so she was my age when they were starting. And all she can talk about is how I should shave my legs and that if I took off all my earrings but one pair I'd look so nice. So, I go—."

I hold up my hand.

"Stop," I say. "In the first place, you don't 'go,' you 'say.' In the second, you and your mom are not my business."

"Oh," she says. "I'm sorry." She starts to get up.

"Wait," I say. She hefts the bag to her shoulder and wobbles a little from the weight. Compost, I imagine.

"Listen," I say. "If you want people to hear, write so they can hear. Rewrite that piece. Write only about how you heard, what you heard...not so much the people on the stage, but the people around you...OK?"

"Far out," she says. She flops the bag on my desk and begins rummaging in it. "Here," she says, "this is for you. I got it at Telluride. Purple's a high healing power." She sets a little amethyst crystal on my desk. I pick it up and hold it in the fluorescent light.

"Sunlight," she says. "Natural light, that's what works."

"It's pretty," I say. "Thank you."

"Blessed be," she says, blushes, and leaves. I rub the crystal along my temples. It's not much more than a small cool smoothness.

The Kid is next and he's very carefully carelessly beautiful. He's wearing sleek shades, the mirrored kind. He's got a long tweed coat on over beat-up Levis and a clean clean white, button-down shirt. I have to look away. How he does what he does—put that surface together without a flaw—it scares me. He's curled his hair and when he pulls off his shades, I can see that he's lined his eyes with indigo pencil. He's got those rich-bitch fine-ass features that a poor Michael J. has had to carve from his living skin and bones. There's a silver moon in the Kid's left ear. It's curved up. My friend, Ramona, once told me her people believed that kind of moon was a sign of withholding.

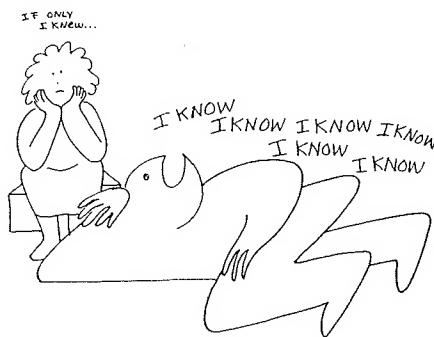
"I didn't expect you'd deal in success or failure," he says.

"You're too damn young to be so damn hip," I say quietly.

"Who judges?" he says quickly. "I like to shatter things."

"Honey," I say, "you've got to make before you break."

"I didn't sign on for political theory," he says and smiles. "But, Ms. Green, while we're at it, what are yours?"



"A," I say. "And I am Ms. Green, and this is office hours for Creative Writing 1."

"A for anarchy?" he persists.

"A for apolitical," I say. "You're too smart for this... and I'm getting bored."

I watch him shape himself back into what he thinks I want to see. He takes off his coat. A scent rises from him. It's bitter and piney and somehow comforting.

"It's juniper smoke," he says. "I got smudged before I came here."

"Are you Indian?" I ask.

"No," he laughs. "But I might wannabe."

It's a joke here, a slur. Leftover burnouts from the old days; rootless white kids; middle-aged left-wing politicians who wannabe—you can find them at Big Mountain rallies, up on the Mesas at the dances. Navajo, Hopi, Yaqui, that's what they wannabe. Usetabe me they'd wannabe. Back in '61, back in SNCC, in Chicago, in Detroit, in little southern towns, the white girls in cotton shifts, the boys in overalls, the ones who said "Right on" and "yo mama" and learned to signify, I wonder where they are.

"Well, you ain't," I say. "You are what we refer to these days as a son of the dominant culture. How'd you find out about Burroughs?"

"He was a friend of a friend of my dad's," he says.

I know he's lying. "Whatever," I say. "Cut-up ain't nothin' but t.p. to me," I say. "What are we going to do about this?"

"I'll write something different," he says. He looks down. There's a copy of an international literary magazine on my desk, one of those with photographs so technically perfect that they seem to float up off the page and monstrous stories of people who disappear and those who disappear them. I'm reviewing something for the magazine, a book on South Africa, on women—a country far removed from me, a sex I've come to believe I barely know.

"Is this the kind of stuff you read?" the Kid asks.

"Sometimes," I say. I check my watch. "Time to close up shop," I say and nod at the door.

He's staring at a page in the magazine. "Can I borrow this?" he asks. His voice is thick. When he looks up, his eyes are trancey.

"Be careful," I say.

Rain misses the next class. The Kid hands in his rewrite and the new assignment in that same stained envelope. I feel a little lump in the package. That night, as I take out his work, a sprig of dry sage falls out. I crush it between my fingers and rub the oils into my wrists, along my temple. I can smell a place I'd like to know. I'm a little surprised when I see that the accompanying pages are blank. I take up the rewrite with the sage scent plain and strong in the air.

"In the pines out behind my mom's house," the Kid has written, "there is a trick of light in early evening so that suddenly I'm walking through flowers. A moment before, a moment after, there's only a different light and dry grasses."

I give him an A for the work. I fail the blank pages and give him an A+ for the sage.

Three days later the Kid stops me after a graduate seminar and asks if we can talk.

"I'll listen," I say. We go to my office and he waits politely till I'm settled in. Then he slaps the magazine down on the desk and just looks at me. He's drawn a tiny silver star on his left cheekbone. It's terrific against his olive skin. It works like a TV screen in a gloomy bar; my eyes are pulled back to it, again and again.

"This stuff is true?" he says.

"Yes," I say.

"They would really take a person and shove, you know... a boiling hot rock up their ass? They would do that?" he asks.

"And more," I say.

"OK," he says. "How did I miss all this? I read. I watch TV. My mom's real aware of things."

"Who would want to know about it?" I ask.

"Right," he says. "You got any more stuff?"

I MAY NOT KNOW WHAT HE SAYS HE KNOWS...

BUT I NEVER
AM BOILING
FROM
BOILING
I KNOW
I KNOW.

AT LEAST I LISTEN...
AND LOOK
AND FEEL
AND SEE...

SO WHO CARES IF I DON'T KNOW I KNOW.

I KNOW I KNOW I KNOW

I KNOW I KNOW I KNOW

I KNOW I KNOW I KNOW

I hand him a pamphlet on Chile, on the Mothers. One of their finest journalists, now dead, wrote it. Someone here, a woman who has left that country, translated it. The Kid thanks me and leaves his second rewrite on my desk. When I finish, I truly want to be there, on that north California coastline. I want to see the Great Blue Heron. I want to smell the salt and pine of the air.

A few classes later, we are starting to get to know each other. None of them has withdrawn. They have turned in their poorest, their OK, their on-the-way-to-good, and their surprising work on how it might be to be a visitor in a foreign country where one could not speak the language and where one was immediately identifiable as a stranger. Jon, one of the jams boys, wrote about visiting the girl's locker room. They have begun to critique each other, to be very harsh or silent, to say what they would like to hear, and, sometimes, to say what I could not.

Debby Yazzie has tapped on my office door, that door being wide open, she being unable to raise her eyes to meet mine, which I understand. A century ago I might have been seen by her people as some kind of witch, possibly one of those who is so dreadful that its name is not spoken. She wants to know if I ever read Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, and she wonders if I know that it isn't so different sometimes for girls of her background. She tells me her favorite sister has gone East to school and that her professor, a Japanese woman born in California, had suggested the book. I have to smile. So does she.

"You know about the eyes?" she asks cautiously.

"We were slaves," I say. "Different danger, same gateway."

Angela," I write about halfway through the semester. "Help me, child, I am intolerant as our good Governor. I look at most of the white kids' papers and all I can see is weak sentences and bad spelling and arrogance and can't think and don't give a damn. One writes this thin stuff about perfect people in perfect marriages with perfect children who suddenly have a DISASTER! and prevail perfectly. Another one writes fairy tales. This young man, the clone with the perfect bone structure, keeps writing this obscene elegant mess about cocaine and cars and pussy. I can't tell most of the rest of them apart.

"I am a failure of compassion."

"You need a man," she writes back. "Swear to God, Mama, you truly need a man. It's been eight years."

I'm so mad I send a telegram. "Like hell I do." She

knows my ups and downs, so she calls and we talk for two hours. Later I wonder if I'm having one of those midlife crises people are getting rich writing about.

Nobody comes in during office hours. The mail is a joy. U. of New Mexico Press wants to publish a small collection of my essays on barely known women writers of color. Harper's buys a short piece. There is an invitation from my chairman to come in and discuss a few things. I lock up and head down the hall.

He is free. He smiles, offers me sherry, and tells me he's delighted to hear my news, because, frankly, he has become concerned about my failure to make certain linkages between teaching and publication. It appears that my priorities are skewed. I dare not drink the sherry or I will have to ask him in a plainly nasty way what the hell a "linkage" is. They all talk like that these days, not just the education faculty.

I meet Margot for lunch to celebrate New Mexico and Harper's. I bitch clear through her Chardonnay and soda, my rum and Coke, both our salads, and the chocolate suicide we split. I tell her about Angela's diagnosis. She laughs.

"Julie tells me the same thing," she says. Julie is her twenty-year-old going-on-ancient daughter, who lives in Seattle and knows about securities and porbellies and Ginny Maes. She's on two phones eight hours a day and in the company library six more. She tells Margot she's too busy for a man, but that Margot, being advanced in years, has the luxury of kicking back and "drawing in" the right one. She, like Angela, believes we draw in the events and people in our lives; draw in negative and, uh, draw in positive—well, my my my! I think living with the threat of nuclear annihilation has softened their brains.

"I got to start drawing in those positive men," I say to Margot, "all those smart, healthy, horny, available middle-aged Black men."

"Are there any?" Margot asks.

"I believe they are out there in the astral plane somewhere... just waiting on us positive women along with all the smart, etc. white guys," I say.

That's when we order chocolate suicide and two spoons. Draw in positive and you get chocolate suicide and two not-too-bad-lookin' women laughing and a lunch check for thirty dollars.

That night when the phone rings I almost don't answer it. It is the Kid. His voice sounds funny. At first I think he's high and start to tell him that Ms. Gre

and Creative Writing I do not exist for students mess-
ing with drugs.

"Something happened to the beige one," he says,
"to Mark." I realize he's absolutely sober.

"What?" I ask.

"He jumped out of the ninth floor of the math
tower," he says.

It happens about twice a year at this school. I stare
up at the ceiling. "Do Lord," I say before I can stop
myself. I suddenly wish I had white gloves and good
hat and someplace to wear them, someplace where
people sang, where people knew each other. I can
hear the Kid make some muffled noise.

"I'm here," I say.

"We went for coffee a couple times," the Kid says.
"No big deal, I think we were curious about each
other. I used to tease him and he got so he'd tease
back. He'd been so tight, so safe. I played one of the
early Talking Heads tapes for him once. He liked it. I
told him he looked like David Byrne. He finally got
the joke."

"Listen," I say, "I don't mean to be cold, but there's
nothing left to do...if there ever was anything."

"I know," he says. "I just wanted you to know." I
feel my belly tighten. There is a chill up my back.
Some feeling starts to crawl toward the surface. I notice
the phone is slippery in my hand.

"Write about it," I say. "I've got to go."

"Wait," he says. "I knew you'd say that. That's all
there is to do, really, isn't there? I've been reading
those plays you gave me about South Africa. I thought
it was all some nice safe liberal hands-linked-in-front-
of-the-embassy deal. It's not, right? It's about people
being trapped, right? People being killed by some-
thing that sucks the air out of them?"

"Write about it," I say. "Like that. That's all I've got
to give you."

After I hang up the phone I start to think about
chocolate suicide. I don't mean to, but the phrase
keeps coming back and back and then I start to laugh
and then to cry. I've been working on an article on
linear plotting vs./and flashback. I shut off the type-
writer and slip an old tape into the deck. The mech-
anism lurches and Aretha Franklin's voice, the young
Aretha Franklin's voice finishes me off. I flop on the
couch and let those damn tears run down the sides
of my face.

"Bridge over troubled waters..."

I asked for this. I'm crying so hard my chest hurts.
My nose is running and I can hardly breathe. If I had
the Kid's number I'd call him back but I don't, so I
just lie on the damp couch cushion and imagine my
grandma sitting in the room, wiping my face with

something wet and good-smelling, telling me to
hush, calling me child.

There's a hole in the seminar. You can't miss it,
and you can't say a thing about it, especially me. We're
rolling on toward the last few classes. The Kid is writ-
ing about the early days, about the smell off the Bay
and the new people who began to move in and the
divorce and split custody and always being the new
kid in class. Rain is dotting her i's with dots. Toby
has ceased to remind me of an oil slick under a
Jaguar-XKE. Every image I arrive at for him is a sleek
cliché, and I give up, wondering if that failure isn't
the definition. I think once of *The Shining*. I imagine
him peeking around the classroom door, his perfect
hair a mess, his gorgeous face grotesque, him whis-
pering, "Heeeeeere's Toby!"

Debby Yazzie comes to my office and walks right
in. She looks me in the eye and hands me a paper.

"It's called 'The Lady in Turquoise,'" she says. "I
was thinking about sending it to her, to that Shange
woman. I wanted you to read it first."

"I'll read it," I say. "But go ahead and send it. I bet
she gets lonely out there."

"Alright!" she says and pauses. She's looking at me
like she's measuring me for something.

"Listen," she says. "If you want to try some of our
food, there's a restaurant up near that old grade
school. You could go there." She says the next part
quickly. "A lot of the neighborhood people do.
Doesn't matter, you know!"

"I'll do that," I say. "When I used to live up north,
I used to go out to Gray Mountain."

She smiles. I see clearly how beautiful she is, in her
torn Motley Crue T-shirt, with the lean flawless line
of her perfect belly visible, with the three woven Gua-
temalan bracelets on her wrist, with her hair bleached
and permed into that early '80s flip the girls on the
Res seem to love. She unties one of the bracelets
and hands it to me. We tie it around my wrist.

"Till it falls off, right?" I ask.

"For friendship," she says. "I may have to miss the
last class. My grandma might need me up there. She's
getting really old." She giggles. "She's so little," she
says. "Her head comes to my shoulder."

"My grandma's too," I say. I think of that small,
proper, fierce woman.

Debby reaches out her hand. "I want you to know
I learned a lot," she says. We shake. Her grip is gentle
as a child's.

She is gone by the second-to-last class. I give them

their last assignment. It is also their final. It will count for half their grade. Pastel Jennifer raises her hand.

"Is that fair, do you think?" she asks.

"Yes," I say.

"Well, why?" she says.

"Because I am Ms. Green and this is Creative Writing 1 and you are taking it."

"Well," she says, "I can see why you would say that, but you know, you work real hard on a class or something and you really try to get something out of it. I mean, you do your best, you know, like you really care a lot about the assignments and your grade and everything, and it seems you ought to get something out of all of that that's really fair."

"I do," I say.

"No," she says. She is blushing behind her blusher. "I mean me."

Rain is nodding her dreads vigorously. The Kid looks at me and shakes his head. "That's cold, Ms. Green," he says.

"True," I say. "However, when one uses 'you' for 'me,' I stop listening. I get bored. I don't like to be bored, OK?"

I hate myself for that "OK?" and the Kid knows it. He grins.

"Jennifer," I say. "Come and see me. I won't change my grading system, but I'll tell you I'm sorry for what I just did."

"OK," she says and makes it almost a question.

They leave the room with the assignment, which is the standard one. I want them to write a short story, no more than twenty pages, no less than ten. That's all, except that I want it to be of content and quality. If they don't know what I mean, it's too late.

Jennifer never makes it to my office, but Rain does. She's tucked her dreads up into a knit tam o' shanter. It's red and black and green, and I can hardly stand to look at it and her pale face, woebegone and hopeful, beneath it.

"I don't know if you can help me with this?" she says and perches on the chair. She pulls off her tam and her hair tumbles stiffly down around her shoulders. She's strung some tiny bells in her braids. I wait for the sound to fade.

"That carries our prayers," she says firmly.

"I never heard that one," I say.

"It's Tibetan," she says. "We're all métis," she says, "mixed, you know. Like, we suffer the same, we pray the same."

"What if I reject that?" I ask and wish I hadn't. I know what comes next and it does.

"No problem," she says calmly. "It just is."

I am spared more because she folds her thin hands in front of her and says, "I have a problem and I wonder if maybe you could help me?" She smiles with a genuinely wistful smile.

"Hopefully," I say and, for the first time in the semester, I hear her laugh. It's good laugh, straight up from her chest. The bells chime along. She takes a deep breath, closes her ginger eyes and gets serious.

"My old man left me," she says and suddenly begins to sob. "Don't worry," she says, "it's good to cry like this, to let your feelings out. It clears the fourth chakra."

I hand her a tissue. I wonder how they get out of bed in the morning and find their way here, these kids who live in this maze of teachings. I watch her rub her eyes.

"Really," she says, "It's OK. Besides, I drew him in, you know, and everything that happens works out. I see that it isn't even teaching, it's a cheerful chaos of beginnings of teachings. And the others, the ones who believe that they know exactly where they'll be in ten years, the ones with the Life Plans, the ones who look burnished, I cannot bear to think of them."

"Your father left?" I ask, though I know better.

"No," she whispers, "Miguel, my old man. He went back to his old old lady. It's not him. It's me. I don't know how to let go." She starts to sob again. She is so tiny, the noise so big. I'm glad it's an evening and we're nearly alone in the building.

"Rain," I say. I think I am going to firmly suggest that she take a deep breath, sip some water, go home, take a hot bath, meditate, and listen to the Dead. But I don't. I say, "I know how it is."

"You do?" she says, and I realize she cannot imagine how one as hefty and middle-aged as I could know about any of this.

"Yes," I say. "It's happened more than once. I live it every time, except that I usually lose a few points. It'll probably happen again."

"What did you do?" she asks. "Like, how did you let him go?"

"I drank," I say. "I lived on yogurt till I could stop eating too much again. Chocolate. Work. Once I moved two thousand miles. I don't recommend any of those options."

"But," her voice rises to a wail, "how did you let it?"

"I waited for time to pass," I say. "And I wrote about it."

She takes a green crystal from her pocket and rubs it on the place where I can see her heart pulse in her throat. "Sometimes this helps," she says. She hands it to me and I rub it over my throat. It feels good.

clean and smooth, a little warm from her skin.

"Yes," I say, "my grandma had this herb tea she made for heart troubles—not for the physical kind: for the man-woman kind. She died before she taught it to me."

Rain tucks the crystal back in her purse. When she closes the bag, a puff of air carries the scent of old leather and patchouli and herbs.

"My mom takes Valium," she says and giggles.

"Different strokes..." I say.

"Well, hopefully..." She grins.

"Write about it," I say. "Content and quality."

"Did you really drink?" she asks.

"I still do," I say. "Rum and warm milk. Almost like medicine."

"Well, like, I don't want to butt in," she says, "but you should try ganja. We believe that alcohol harms the physical envelope." She unwinds from the chair and stretches. Under the layers of clothing and scarves and sashes, her body is lovely. She tucks her dreads up into her cap.

"Ms. Green," she says, "can I ask you something personal?"

"You can ask," I say.

"What's your first name? I mean like if it isn't secret or ritual, you know, or something like that. I'd just like to know. I mean, what you told me today, it was more like we were friends."

"Antoinette," I say. "Tony, sometimes." She leans down, kisses me on the cheek and is gone.

The last class is a long one. I ask them to read twenty minutes of their story. I time them. I cannot believe how slow the minute hand moves. I don't want to feel this way. By the time the Kid stands in front of the class to read, the setting sun gilds the room. The Kid is wearing a silver dragon on a chain. In its claws an opal burns. I have grown numb with words. The opal draws my eye. It is an old one. It is fiery and deep, not like the new pale stones built from layers of inferior mineral. The Kid touches the dragon once and begins to read.

"My name is Mark and sometimes people mistake me for David Byrne..."

The Kid's voice shakes. I have watched him grow ashen through the other readings, as though the barrage of words were shrapnel, as though he bled. I wonder if the others see that. Debby Yaz-zie is gone. I read her work. They seemed to be bored by it. Their themes frighten me. Each year it has gotten worse. At the end of his twenty minutes, the Kid has let us begin to be curious about Mark. The sunset is fading. The opal has gone



Nancy Wells *The Beginning of an Extraordinary Friendship*, 1989, watercolor
crayons on vinyl, 27½" x 35".

flat, like one of the newer, cheaper ones.

"Thank you," I say, and the Kid nods. The others look up at me. I thank them. All of us realize we are not going to discuss the work. They begin to pack their things. Rain wipes her eyes with her sleeve. I start down the aisle to collect their papers and see the Kid rise up to meet me. His fine-boned face is swollen and red. He slams his paper down on his desk and brushes past me. I hear him stop. Even Toby looks up.

The Kid starts to cry. He's gasping a little. He can't get his breath to speak. "Do you know?!" he asks. "Do you have even one idea of what they write about in other countries?" He points to Jennifer. She giggles, then starts to cry. He points to Corey and Steve and Jon. Jon says, "Oh maaaaan, lighten up!" The Kid points to Toby and repeats the question.

"Do you have even one idea of what they write about in other countries?"

Toby looks at him, then me. It is as though he is calculating something. The Kid's hand shakes but he holds his stance. "Tell me," he says.

Toby gets up and saunters to the door. Just before he exits, he looks straight in the Kid's eyes and says calmly:

"Yo mama."

The Kid's arm drops. In silence the students file out. Jennifer touches the Kid gently on the shoulder. He nods. He and Rain and I are left in the silent room. We each gather up our papers and pens and various packs and bags and briefcase. The Kid is a little wild-eyed, but he moves with grace through these small ways to put things right. Rain moves between the Kid and me.

"Nick, Tony," she says in a clear voice, "Miguel left some chocolate behind, some beautiful Mexican chocolate with cinnamon in it. I know how to make it. He showed me. I could make up some. Would you come to my room?"

I smile at her.

"OK," she says, "You'll love it. It's not like Quik at all."

"Nick," I say. "So that's your name." I turn back to Rain. "And yours?" I ask. "Is it Rain?"

"My name is Linda," she says. She touches the back of my hand. She touches Nick.

"Really," she says. "Please. I'm glad to have you visit." It's gone dark, and we stand in the dim room a minute. Nick shakes his head as an animal shakes off pain. And then, together, we go out. ☀

Mary Sejourner is the author of Sisters of the Dream (Northland Publishing, Flagstaff, Ariz.), is working on a new novel, Going Through Ghosts, and knows that we are indeed Métis.

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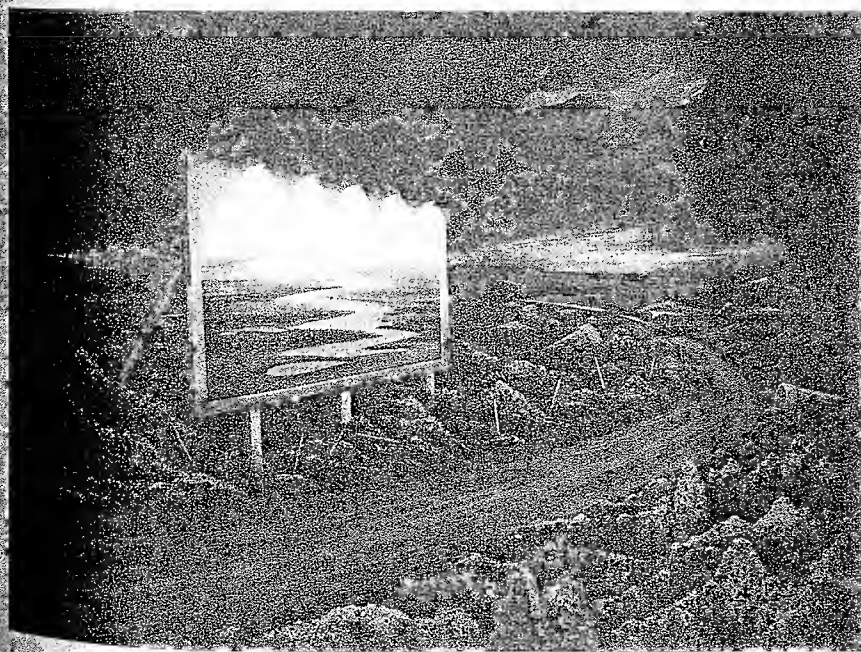
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The Brat from Beverly Hills

HEATHER SUSAN HALEY

SHE LEFT THE HILLS AFTER THE FINAL BELL,
BEVERLY HILLS THAT IS.
SHE KEPT THE BABY FAT AND THE KETCHUP STAINS,
AND PITCHED OUT THE SILK BLOUSES FOREVER,
TO SET UP BAD HOUSEKEEPING IN SILVERLAKE,
WHICH WAS AS FOREIGN TO HER AS BEIRUT.
SHE HAS THE AMBITION THAT EARMARKS HER GENERATION,
BUT SHE'S DIFFERENT... SHE WANTS TO SPIT IN MOMMY'S EYE
AND BE A SLOB WHEN SHE GROWS UP.
WHEN I ASKED HER WHY SHE LEFT, SHE SAID,
"I GUESS BECAUSE IT'S TOO CLEAN THERE.
THEY ALWAYS TRIM MY HAIR AND CUT ME DOWN TO SIZE.
IT'S TOO QUIET THERE, YOU KNOW, THE GOOD LIFE
IN THE GREAT INDOORS, WARM IN WINTER, COOL IN SUMMER
AND SO BLOODY BORING ALL YEAR ROUND."
SHE ALREADY HAS REGRETS.
SHE COULD USE A GOOD CONFESSION
INSTEAD OF FLOUNDERING AROUND IN THE GUTTER.
LIKE A BRAT OUT OF BEVERLY HILLS.
SHE HAS HER QUIET SIDE TOO, LIKE LATE AT NIGHT
WITH THE TV ON AS SHE SLEEPS ALONE,
THE FLOOR BOOBY-TRAPPED WITH HAAGEN-DAZS
TUBS AND BILLBOARD MAGAZINES.
IN HER DREAMS, THE IMPRESSION SHE MAKES ON THE
RECORD COMPANY EXECUTIVES IS ALWAYS A STRONG ONE,
AND THEY HIRE HER ON THE SPOT
BECAUSE SHE IS SO BRILLIANT AND SO SENSITIVE.

Heather Susan Haley is a singer-songwriter and a free-lance writer and editor. She publishes Rattler, a multimedia arts and literary journal named Best Poetry Magazine by the L.A. Weekly, and also runs a 24-track recording studio called The Ethical Pool.



Janet Culbertson *Untitled I*, 1988-89, oil on canvas, 34"x46". Photo: Noel Rowe.
Janet Culbertson is an artist-ecologist who lives and works in Shelter Island, New York.



Joni Sternbach *Untitled*, 1989, photograph.

Joni Sternbach is an adjunct professor of photography at New York University and also a photography instructor at the 920 Street Y. She was a 1985 recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts grant.

Signs/Signals

JUDITE DOS SANTOS

For the moment we postpone our dreams
For the dreams we postpone our wishes
For the wages we go on rushing
For the image we go on faking
For the future we go on hurting
For the car we go on walking
For the pleasure we go on drinking
For the system we go on buying
For the games we go on watching
For the promises we go on waiting
For the riches we go on paying
For the paying we go on laboring
For the future there are always promises
For the present there are always dreams
The billboard holds the excitement
For living can always wait

The man in gray suit next to me writes:
no market value.

When Yeoun Jae Kang interviewed me in late 1988 I was a junior majoring in art history at Mills College in Oakland, California. As co-director of the Mills College Asian-American Women's Art Research Project, I work with Moira Roth, the project's other director. Professor Roth, a feminist art historian and head of the art department at Mills College, devises projects that teach students the how and why of finding the missing threads of our country's artistic fabric. Specifically, we are working on this project to direct the campus toward becoming a center for research on multicultural women's art.

them to discuss their lives and their art freely. Thirdly, we hope to make a "sampler" videotape with some of these artists, which would make them more readily accessible to curators, collectors, and critics.

Since no one seemed to have done much research before on this subject, I didn't know quite how to go about finding material. Moira Roth handed me a stack of general articles on women artists of color and organizations. We talked at length about the problems I might encounter and how to deal with them. She suggested that I contact Margo Machida, a New York artist who was also collecting material on this subject. Margo had a list of some twenty artists and organizations. So I began. I started contacting as many local Asian community organizations as I could locate in order to ask for names. Mostly through word of mouth, I quickly began collecting names of West Coast Asian-American women artists. Currently I have collected over seventy names, and we have begun to contact them for material.

I had to learn effective phone skills—how to talk to people concisely while creating an interest in my project. While it may seem trivial, it was quite necessary to buy an answering machine to handle the phone messages. Many times I wished I had a full-time secretary to handle the mail and phones. Organization is key. I set up a filing system for the artists with articles and exhibition catalogs. I began to use a computer to store

BONE BY BONE:

YJK: How did you go about the research?

DA: There are many aspects to this research project. The first task was to collect material: lists of names and addresses, articles, and literature on the artists and slides of their work (which we intend to house in the Mills slide library for future reference). Secondly, we have begun to conduct interviews with certain artists. To conduct a good interview requires thinking on several levels at once: Is the tape recorder still working? What should I ask her next? What did she just say that seemed significant? Most importantly, trust and rapport with the artists must be established in order for

and update information and to print out correspondence to organizations and artists.

YJK: What have you learned so far from your research?

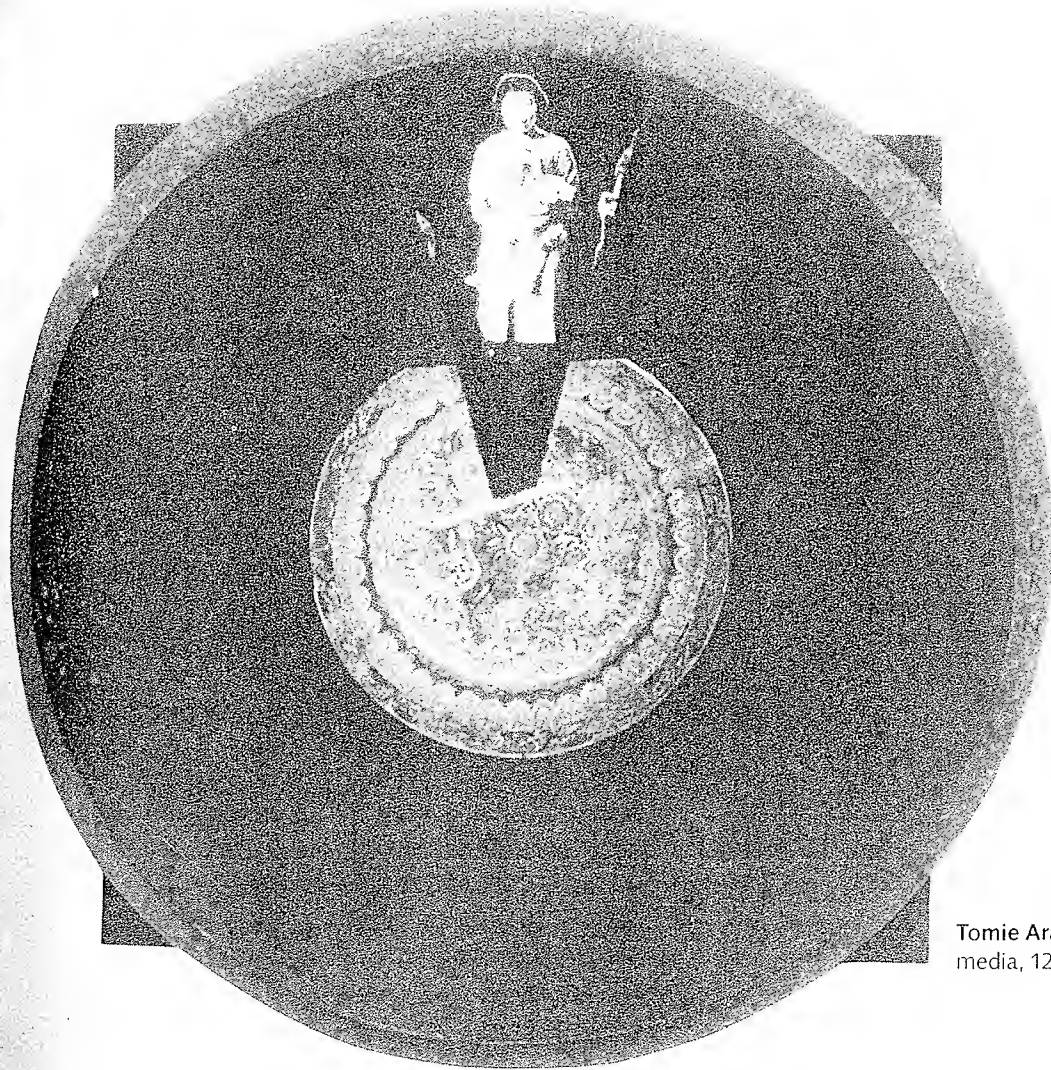
DA: The first thing I realized was the terrible dearth of information on Asian-American artists in general and the lack of a functional network system among them. The absence of scholarship on the subject of Asian-American artists may explain the lack of a network system. They are a fragmented group: Some Asian-American artists work solely within the Asian communities, while others work primarily in mainstream art venues without much contact with other Asian-American artists.

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Tomie Arai *Women's Wheel*, 1989, mixed media, 12"x12". Photo: D. James Dee.

How and Why To Research the Work of Asian-American Women Artists

DAWN AOTANI

Secondly, while I knew there would be diversity within the Asian-American experience, I wasn't aware of the specific aspects that I needed to consider in my research, such as whether the artists were American-born or had immigrated as children or adults.

Thirdly, the term "Asian-American" is so broad. There are significantly different groups of Asian-Americans: Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Vietnamese-Americans, Korean-Americans, and so on. I had to focus on the context of each Asian-American artist: her specific cultural heritage and her family's circumstances as well as her personal history. Essentially, the type of

Asian heritage and the degree of assimilation determine different needs, expectations, and experiences.

Fourthly, I had to reevaluate what I considered to be the boundaries with regard to medium. For example, in addition to the standard "high art" forms, such as painting and sculpture, I have come across several Japanese-American women artists working in textile and ceramics. Textile art, such as fiber and weaving, and ceramics, which have deep historical roots in Japanese culture, have often been written off in the West as merely "craft." It is easier nowadays to argue for these "crafts" as legitimate art forms because of the

efforts made by American feminists in the 1970s on behalf of this country's quilts and folk arts.

Finally, I realize that research in this subject must be continued. The primary goal of this project is that it should act as a catalyst for further inquiry. This project is not an end in itself but rather a beginning. It's exciting right now, however, because I am connecting with people who have heard about the project and want lists or want to suggest more names. It's beginning to function as a much-needed network system, and I plan soon to publish (in some modest form) an Asian-American women artists; newsletter. It would be interesting to see these artists create a support system among themselves and to see the results of such a support system.

YJK: Could you talk specifically about the situation of contemporary Asian-American art?

DA: There is a tendency for financial and critical support to be given to traditional Asian arts over contemporary Asian-American art. This tendency suggests a stereotype of a "pure" Asian form, that one is either Asian or American, two separate identities. This situation is reflective of a larger problem with stereotypes in this country. Financial and critical support needs to extend out to encompass contemporary Asian-American artists; this would then help validate the voices of Asians who are Americans. Asian-Americans are not simply Asian nor are they apple-pie American, but to varying degrees they are a blend of both cultures; they can never ignore one or the other. Then there is the problem of the stereotype of "the Asian-American." For example, in professional and educational spheres, there is the stereotype that Asian-Americans excel only in math and sciences. Well, what about those Asian-Americans who are interested in the arts?

YJK: What is the general current situation of support, financial and critical, for women artists of color?

DA: Public money in support of the arts tends to go to those organizations that support predominantly white male artists. When financial and critical support is given to artists other than white male artists, it is usually given to white women and/or male nonwhite artists. So here, with women artists of color, we have a situation of a double minority status; consequently they tend to be overlooked a great deal. In general, the problem with color or ethnic diversity in museums includes not only the color of the artists but also that of the administrative staff. There are several reasons why more "minorities"

need to be on the walls and within the administration. First, for social and political reasons, the art should be representative of the public. "Minorities" are an increasingly significant part of the population of the United States. In the case of the San Francisco area, whites now make up less than 50 percent of the population. (Therefore, the term "minority" now seems inappropriate.) Second, simply based on its quality, this art should be shown.

YJK: What are your personal reasons for doing the project?

DA: Mostly it's my own way of understanding myself. I am Asian-American and a woman interested in the arts. I find it significant that I was raised in Hawaii, because Asians are far from being the minority there; we are in fact the majority. Consequently I never considered myself as a minority. So when I came to the mainland for college, I was shocked by racial stereotypes. I was fearful of believing in them and felt it necessary to prove them wrong. My interest in art led me in search of Asian-American women artists, who became role models for me and whose work provided me with many insights into our particular cultural experience. Essentially, however, I began thinking about all this in 1984, while still in Hawaii, when I wrote a senior paper, "Assimilation of the Asian-American Female," based on Maxine Hong Kingston's novel *The Woman Warrior*, which was my first introduction to an Asian-American woman's voice.

In late 1987 I found this touching passage by Alice Walker, which tells of her search for the unmarked grave of Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston was a major black woman writer who died unrecognized and whose beautiful work and life influenced Walker greatly.

We are a people. A people do not throw their geniuses away. And if they are thrown away, it is our duty as artists and as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children, and, if necessary, bone by bone.

(Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.])

For me, there was something very inspirational in Alice Walker's determined efforts to validate the achievements and existence of another black woman writer. I want to do the same for Asian-American women artists: to find these women and publish their voices. ☀

Dawn Aotani was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1965. She recently graduated from Mills College in Oakland, California, with a B.A. in art history.

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SOME NOTES FROM CAMPUSES

Women, Art,
and Cross-
Cultural Issues

LUCY R. LIPPARD


for a seminar called "Women, Art, and Cross-Cultural Issues" taught for one semester in 1989 at the University of Colorado in Boulder, I had to make my own (huge) reader of articles, artists' statements, and catalogue texts because there were virtually no texts that dealt with these issues together. The required books were *Heresies* "Third World Women" and "Racism Is the Issue" (nos. 4 and 8, 1978 and 1979); *Autobiography: In Her Own Image* (the catalogue of a traveling show curated by Howardena Pindell that originated at INTAR, New York City); and the two issues of *Cultural Critique* (nos. 6 and 7, 1987) that focused on "The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse."

The class was too big (twenty-five) to conduct as a seminar, so I started each

day with a slide blitz of work by women of color (and by a few white women who had really thought about the issues); then we discussed readings or films and videos seen. Each student was required to write three letters: first, to herself, explaining who she was from a cultural viewpoint and what her experiences around race and culture had been; second, to an artist whose work I had shown, kind of an imaginary studio interview; third, to her granddaughter, who might be of a different or mixed race.

The final requirement was to execute, collaboratively, an activist project on campus, to take the issues we had discussed out of the classroom and into the broader community. One group "seeded" bathrooms in various departments with graffiti about racism and sexism and then recorded the "responses." Another did a piece on index cards mixed with the usual fare on the Student Union bulletin board. The most ambitious project was a huge "monopoly game" on brown

paper strips surrounding the fountain that is the core of the campus. Two big dice floated in the water, and the board game's squares dealt in words and images with race, sex, and other social issues in the context of events at and around the university. A videotape was made of the event.

Finally, one student group worked with me on a two-day symposium I have organized in Boulder for two years (and intend to continue). It's called "Mixing It Up" and brings to campus four women artists of color—an African-American, an Asian-American, a Latina, and a Native American—to make a small exhibition; speak; do workshops; radio and video interviews; interact with students in and out of studios; and generally provide voices rarely heard on this campus. (In 1988 the artists were Beverly Buchanan, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Yong Soon Min, and Jaune Quick-To-See Smith; in 1989, Judy Baca, Robbie McCauley, Jolene Rickard, and May Sun.) These personal informal encounters were probably more effective than anything I did in class. 

Lucy R. Lippard is a writer and activist who lives in New York and Boulder, Colorado. She recently completed a book for Pantheon called Mixed Blessings.



Sara Pasti Tracy, 1989, marker on board.

Aesthetic Questions

RUTH BASS & MARSHA CUMMINS

Aesthetic questions were used to structure an interdisciplinary course in aesthetics developed by several Bronx Community College faculty members with the support of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The course was structured around three major questions: Are truth and beauty synonymous? Does art reflect or influence society? To what extent does order or chaos in art reflect human nature? The questions, each of which was framed with three subquestions, were discussed in relation to works of art, architecture, music, poetry, dance, drama, and aesthetic theories.

The format of using questions rather

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ties fellow in The Community Colleges Project under a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Marsba Cummins, Ph.D., has been a professor of English at Bronx Community College since 1971. She is extremely involved with the Writing Across the Curriculum movement, which arose out of a need for greater literacy, fluency, and comprehension in a nonwriting age.

African America: Images, Ideas, and Realities

Eva Grudin teaches African, European, and African-American art at Williams College in Massachusetts. She mounted the exhibition and wrote the catalogue for Stitching Memories: African-American Story Quilts, which traveled from the Williams College Museum to the Studio Museum of Harlem in 1989–90. Grudin and Reginald Hildebrand, her colleague in the history department, devised this interdisciplinary course as a means to study the experiences of Blacks in America.

"African America: Images, Ideas, and Realities," a course first taught in Fall 1989 at Williams College in Massachusetts, was designed to investigate images of and by Blacks. The class of mostly juniors investigated the kinds of images most commonly portrayed, the people who controlled these images, and to what end. Paintings, photographs, advertisements, and films were the primary documents. Discarding the usual hierarchies, the class freely mingled fine art and popular culture: Faith Ringgold's quilts, the California Raisins, and Robert Mapplethorpe's contortionists were given equal consideration.

The essay assignment for the course concerned racial stereotypes and assumed a basic grounding in African-American history. The students were given four pictures of Aunt Jemima. One image from the turn of the century and another from the 1930s came from the catalogue *Ethnic Notions*. The other two images, the 1968–89 Jemima and the latest pearl-eared version, were provided by the Quaker Oats Company's

Theoretical work: Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, June 23, 1926.

Artists: Betye Saar, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Alma W. Thomas, Faith Ringgold, Howardena Pindell, Sam Gilliam, Maxine Hong Kingston, Bernard Malamud, Jimmy Durham, Kay Walkingstick.

Theoretical work: Monroe C. Beardsley, "Moral and Critical Judgments" in *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*.

Artists: June Jordan, Imamu Baraka, Pablo Neruda, Chinua Achebe, Spike Lee, Judy Chicago, Hannah Wilke, Hung Liu, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Ida Applebroog, Leon Golub, Sue Coe, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo.

"This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Aunt Jemima trademark and design, formulated by two men in St. Joseph, Missouri, to market their Davis Milling Company packaged flour, the first ready-made mix of any kind ever developed. Their fictive character of Aunt Jemima has become the most tenacious of ethnic stereotypes. Write a short (approximately five-page) paper in which you consider the social, economic, and historical factors that account for the origins and persistence of this advertising image. In addition, compare the four changing images of Aunt Jemima provided for you and explain why the images change in the way they do. Consider, too, what in the course of time has not changed."

This topic was the first in twenty years of essay assignments that excited my students enough to have many say their perceptions of the world had been changed.

Devising the art-historical aspects of this course proved difficult for me, however, because I came to this material the hard way—as an autodidact. Books on American art generally make no mention of art by Black Americans. These “comprehensive surveys” ignore even those Black artists who bucked the odds and earned national and international reputations. Edmonia Lewis, Edward Bannister, Aaron Douglas, and William Johnson are just a few of the names that should be familiar to Ph.D.s in American art. They are not. And so I have had to rely more or less on the hunt-and-peck method of research. To spare some of you my early flailing about, I’d like to share some readings.

Important Resources

The Hatch-Billops Collection, 491 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10012. An archive of Black American cultural history that serves as a research library and includes slides, tapes, photographs, and exhibition catalogues. *American Visions: The Magazine of Afro-American Culture*, published by the Visions



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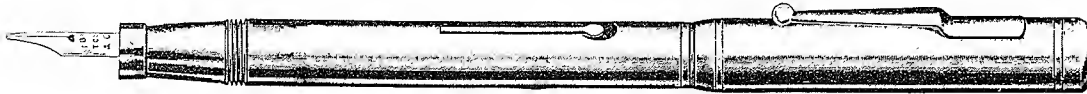
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Brown, Kay. "Where We At: Black Women

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How to Make an Excellent Teacher



BARBARA A. ST. JOHN

Select

one Grade A student with a B.A. (Many grade A students have a tendency to throw themselves into math/science/engineering or M.B.A. pots. You may have to substitute a grade C student.)

Place

student in large, state-funded teachers' college pot after putting through ricier of red tape.

Stir

Vigorously

with tests to throw student off balance.

Place

in education classroom.

Poke

repeatedly with state tacher competencies.

Remove

student from ed classroom and place in elementary/secondary classroom.

Add

a cup of observation.

Repeat

procedure until eyes are glazed and brain is shrunk.

Grab

a handful of strategies, as many as you can, and wrap student tightly.

Sauté

student (low to medium fire) with ed research written requirements.

Return

to elementary/secondary classroom.

Make first check for doneness by

straining

student with cheesecloth made of lesson plans. Student should be half baked by Christmas.

Allow to rest

as with yeast bread.

Repeat

above procedure
except

reduce poking

in the ed classroom,

increase

amount of lesson plan straining, and

grate

with thirty to thirty-five teeny-boppers in elementary/secondary classroom.

About June 15th

check for doneness.

Student should be mentally and physically limp.

Stuff

cored teaching credential in mouth. Student is then ready to be placed in school district pot and is now an Excellent Teacher.

Some experts disagree with this recipe and recommend using only grade A students. If few are available, the grade C specimens should be

basted

with academics during the above procedure. Other experts advise wrapping students with even more strategies. A few recommend none; they would cull experienced personnel from business, industry, or the military and place them raw in the school district pot (a type of sushi). Some suggest that Excellence can only be achieved by adding a pound of internship, thus increasing the straining and grating. Most experts agree, however, that even the completed product needs periodic restirring with continued teacher training and/or testing.

Sprinkle lightly

with dollar bills and a promise of future input into the system to prevent disgust, burnout, or revolution. Expect *Oh's!* and *Ah's!* when served to the public.

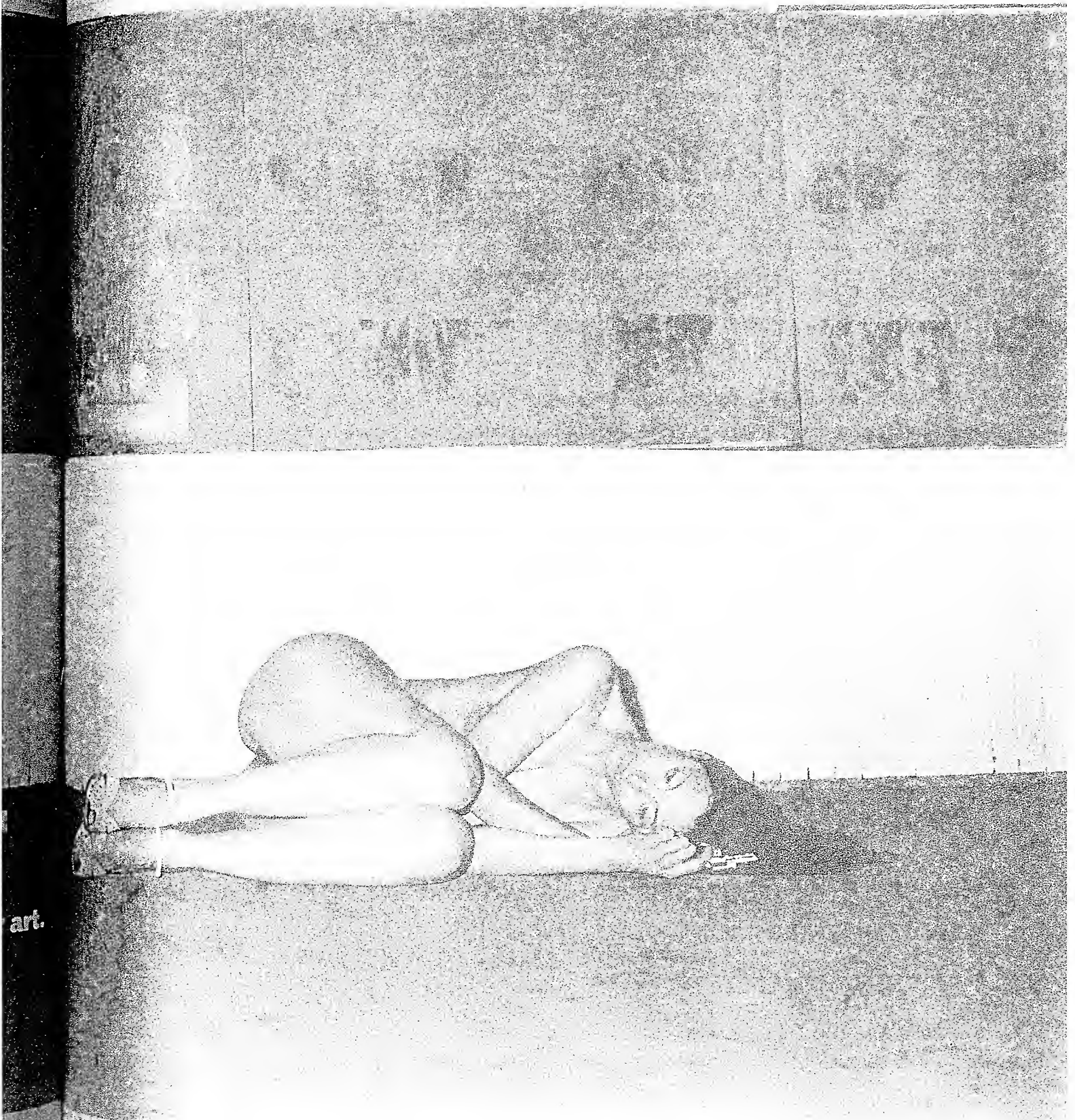
CAUTION: The mere discussion of this recipe with Educational Theorists has been known to cause an aphrodisiac effect.



Barbara A. St. John is an employment and gender equity consultant. She edits Teaching Equity, a gender equity and multicultural education newsletter.

**The photograph leads the mind
to the actual world...
If it is of a nude, it will
make one think of women, not art.**

Harold Rosenberg



Hannah Wilke From *So Help Me Hannah*, 1978, video performance tape, text taken from original installation at P.S. 1, Long Island City, New York
Hannah Wilke created a female iconography in the 1950s. She is a conceptual artist working in sculptural materials, photography, painting, and performance art.

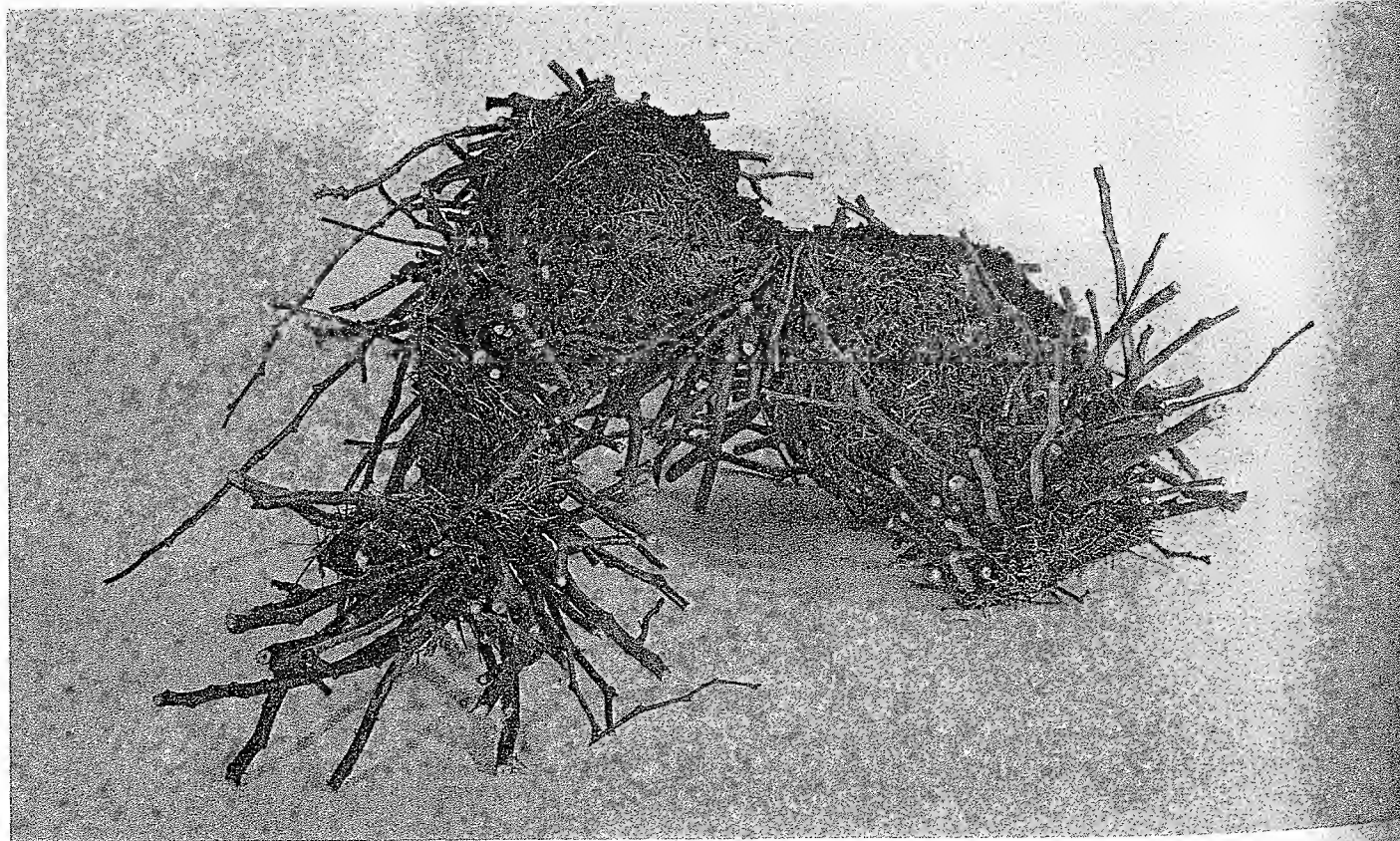
An Open-Trench-Coat Poem for Dirty Boys

VICTORIA GARTON

Yes, I do mean to be catty.
I am tired of male see-my-pecker poets
who always seem to get published. Dirty Boys
from Hoboken to Carmel-by-the-Sea
don't have to lift a metaphor or run a thought
along a line to get some buddy editor
to celebrate every late night emission
they care to spill. Call it penis envy,
call me the castrating female
or, worse, a prude. I stopped
turning somersaults without my pants on
when I was three.

The ways of poetry are many, and whacking
words against thighs, spotting clean sheets
of academic journals with sperm images,
or rimming out the thought-infused mind
with tight little words like *cunt*
must be among the trendy ways of getting off
a load of committee-infested days
and middle-age nights. Or maybe these
are the angry young poets of our day
with little to shoot off but their mouths.
Either way, I for one am tired
of well-entrenched open-trench-coat poets.

Victoria Garton's book of poems Kisses in the Raw Night was published in 1989 by BKMK Press in Kansas City, Mo.

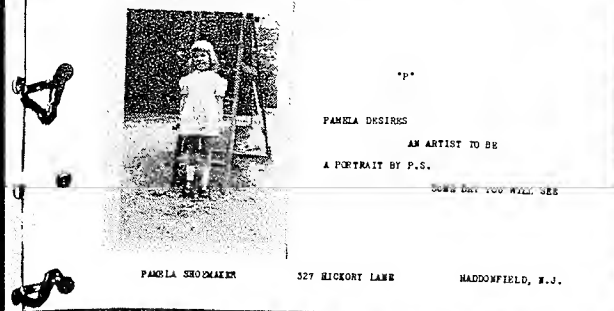


Jerilea Zempel *Other Nature*, 1988, brassiere, twigs, pine needles, adhesive, 96"x18"x18".

Jerilea Zempel is a sculptor who lives in New York and spends time in the Adirondacks.

RAP SHEET

(cherished advice from teachers and family)



Why did you give Santa a black beard?
Santa doesn't have a black beard.

What are those yellow lines coming out
of the sun? You made it look as if the
sun has whiskers.

We don't have a real art program, but
we do have an art teacher who gives
classes twice a week.

You may go to any college you want,
but if you want to go to art school,
you have to live at home and go in
Philadelphia. If you still want to go
after 2 years of college, then we'll
see.

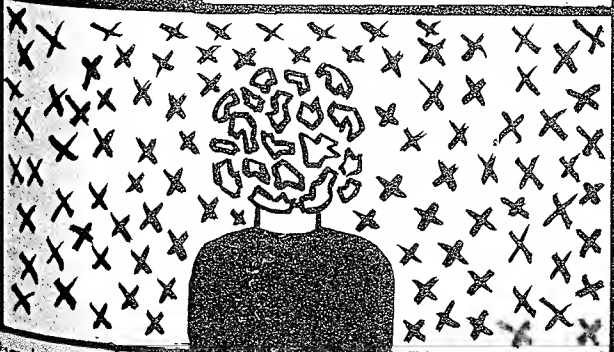
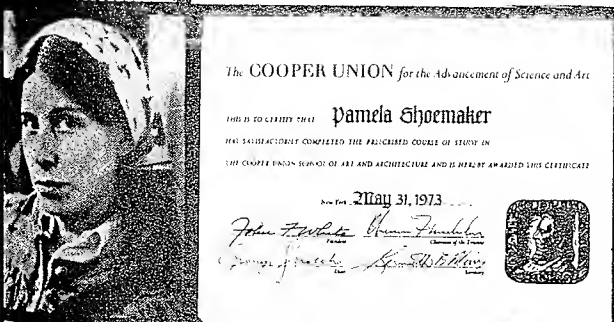
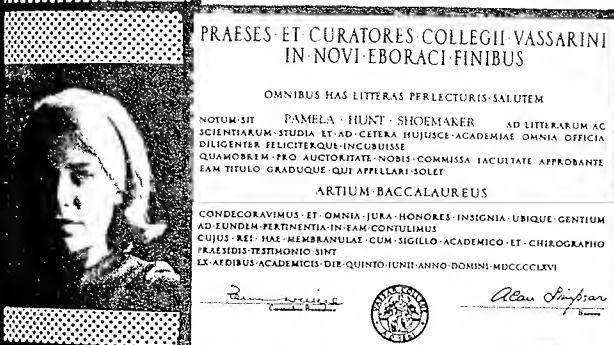
Twenty years old is too young for a
girl to be on her own in New York.
If you want to quit college and go to
art school, you can live at home and
go in Philadelphia.

After four years at a good college,
you should be able to support your-
self. If you still want to go to art
school, you should be able to pay for
it yourself.

Why do you have to quit that wonder-
ful job to go to art school? Why can't
you just take a couple of courses at
the Art Student's League?

Well if you want to be an artist, all
I can say is that you had better find
yourself a rich husband or one who's
a famous artist himself, because no
woman gets anywhere as an artist with-
out one or the other.

Of course in my day people thought an
MFA killed an artist's imagination,
but your sister tells me that now no
artist is taken seriously without one.



Pamela Shoemaker Rap Sheet, 1989, pen and ink.

Pamela Shoemaker is a New York artist whose work appears in public spaces.

People of

From what I have learned so far, sociology is the methodological study of how people interact within society and how society acts upon the individual. Sociology helps people explore patterns in society that some would like to believe don't exist, like how "decent," "normal" people's actions can and do support the extreme actions of such groups as the Ku Klux Klan, how women are taught to disempower themselves, or how the educational system is not much more egalitarian than it was in the fifties. Sociology provides a way to get beyond defensive remarks such as "That's just your opinion" that are so often used to choke off dialogue rather than continue it.

Both more and less than a sociological study, this article is an effort to integrate my semirural, working-class Black/white background with my experiences as a student at Bryn Mawr College and with the functioning mechanisms of the educa-

White

tional system in the United States as a whole. I am the first in my family to attend an Ivy League-level school. My family is so proud of me that I used to feel guilty for the feelings of dissatisfaction and confusion that would strike me just when I was supposed to be so happy. I know that I am not alone in this contradiction.

What is education anyway? It is usually

thought to be a way to "better" oneself. When education is looked at in terms of what it does in society, the term "better" means to raise one's class and economic status. However, those who already have power, wealth, privilege, and status actively want to keep it. Not only do individuals act to maintain their own personal power,

Color at

but groups act as a collective to maintain the status quo distribution of privilege, wealth, and power. This not necessarily calculated or even conscious group maintenance of status quo is called hegemony. In a supposedly class-free capitalist country, education becomes the system of access to power and privilege.

The general rationale goes like this: The United States is a meritocracy where you earn success through your abilities. Schooling enhances and hones those abilities so that you will be more qualified for higher-paying, more prestigious jobs. Some schools are "better" than others, by virtue of having "better" professors and "better" academics to "better" prepare you. Prepare you for what? Ah, that must remain vague if American society is to be viewed as classless and egalitarian! In actuality, schooling tracks you into various levels of the socioeconomic hierarchy, depending on which school you attend. (Haven't you ever wondered why job appli-

cations ask which college you attended?) Some colleges are markers for being the boss not the employee, the manager instead of the managed. It is in the mind-set rather than the academic program of the institution. These are the historically white elitist institutions, which include not only the Ivy League schools (Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Dartmouth, Princeton, and the like) but also their Seven Sisters counterparts: Smith, Radcliffe, Wellesley, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard. Other prestigious institutions such as Swarthmore, Amherst, Duke, and Stanford

provide the next level in the hierarchy. You know the names. They are the ones you are supposed to be impressed by when someone says she/he graduated from there. When interviewing for a job, it is disturbing to note the increased respect in the tone of the interviewer when I say I am a Bryn Mawr graduate. One of the functions of hegemonic control is to con-

Elitist

vince people that there are no mechanisms of control at work, nothing is happening, merit won the day. It also teaches the specially privileged that they deserve privilege and have earned the right to success and special treatment.

I call these colleges "white elitist" because, though they allow People of Color to participate, they remain invested in maintaining a class, economic, racial, and sexual hierarchy with able-bodied white corporate middle-to-upper-class men on top. Though they allow token participation, the actual number of People of Color is kept at a relatively small percentage of the

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The Art of
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Carolien Stikker *They Lied*, 1986, photograph.

community, and the vast majority of people in control—professors and administrators—are somehow always white. These contradictions are what I think has caused the outbreak of racial dissatisfaction on

college campuses across the country during the last few years. Look back in the newspapers and you will see that most of the outbreaks happened at prestigious campuses such as Smith, Stanford, Am-

herst, Dartmouth, Brown, and MIT. It is a common saying at Bryn Mawr that the school teaches you to be a white man, which I always thought was funny, since I have never wanted to be one, but I do

It is a common saying at Bryn Mawr that it teaches you

want security and not to be discriminated against. In American society, that is a privilege reserved for white men.

When I am talking about this subject instead of writing about it, someone usually breaks in about this time and says that I don't know what I am talking about because "Look, there are more nonwhites here than there were twenty years ago. Society is changing and growing, and why are you here anyway if you feel this way?" This is a specific example of the hegemonic process in action. Remember, nothing is going on, and we deserve success. I find it interesting that I occasionally get this reaction from People of Color as well as whites.

So what is going on for Students of Color anyway? It is not enough to say that we are all Oreos, Bananas, and Apples—that is, brown, yellow, and red on the outside and white on the inside—because not all of us are, at least not consciously. Why was I, a loud, proud Black woman, accepted by all the schools to which I applied, including three Seven Sisters? It certainly wasn't my essay saying how great Malcolm X was, and how I want to be like him! At first I thought it was simply because Black women who graduate as valedictorians from New England private schools are rare and that made me a pretty hot item. I truly don't believe that I would be here today if I had stayed at Brewer Public High School.¹ Though my

social rareness probably IS the specific overt conscious reason I was accepted, I think that there are larger sociological forces at play here. I have noticed some rather remarkable similarities in all the very different Students of Color I have met in Ivy League circles.

For example, I began asking American Students of Color, at random, three questions:

1. Is your neighborhood at home mostly white?
2. Was your high school mostly white?
3. Are either of your parents white?

For many of the People of Color I have met outside Ivy League circles, these are really bizarre questions. However, among the students at white elitist colleges, the vast majority have answered yes to at least two out of these three questions! Before I came to college, I had met only one other Black person with a white parent, and yet in the school year 1988–89 at Bryn Mawr, at least ten out of the forty-seven Black American women had a white parent. The point is, even if we are not whitewannabes, a large part of our social orientation has been white-defined. In short, many of the People of Color who choose and get accepted to white elitist colleges are profoundly white-identified. This is a dialectical relationship.

On one level, schools are choosing the "whitest" People of Color to attend the very schools that will train them further to maintain the white-dominated hierarchy.² (This is called being "successful" and "hard working.") We are told repeatedly that we are "special," which implies "not like the rest of our people." We are chosen be-

cause we will "fit in well" at such-and-such school, which implies that we won't make white students, professors, and administrators confront their white-skin privilege. We will not question the very fundamental purpose of the college in perpetuating White Supremacy. In fact, many of us, when we have problems, will attribute them to our own laziness, poor time management, and/or stupidity, just like white people. If we fail, it is because we did poorly, not because the institution is oriented toward a white middle-class existence, which often relegates us to the role of Other. Many Black students have but little historical knowledge of their heritage or a romanticized notion and/or selective memory.

It is important to look at the exceptions resulting from the three questions. The responses of Asians and Caribbeans follow a pattern, which brings me to another aspect of hegemonic practices at work. One does not have to alienate oneself and one's culture if one's culture can be fit into a white-defined mold. Many Asian cultures have their own work ethic, which allows them to work more easily within the white-defined Protestant work ethic. One theory on why significant numbers of Asian-Americans have been successful in this educational system is that they do not have to give up as much of their culture as Afro-American and Native American people do in order to "fit in."

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The point is, even if we are not whitewannabes, a large part

s you be a white man, which I always thought was funny.

Among Black people at Bryn Mawr and Haverford I have noticed large percentages of Caribbean students. This is important because there is tension in the Black community between Afro-American Blacks and Caribbean Blacks.³ The gist of the tension is that Caribbean Blacks tend to view American Blacks as lazy and shiftless, and American Blacks tend to view Caribbean Blacks as stuck-up, cold, and money hungry. What appears to be happening is a cultural clash revealing that Caribbean Black people have an ethic of their own, similar to the Protestant work ethic.⁴ International students are another issue. They tend to come from the ruling or upper-middle classes of their country and therefore have a class identification that is often viewed as the key to "helping them to adjust."

The other part of this dialectical relationship is that white-identified People of Color are more likely to pick white elitist colleges than People of Color who identify with their own culture.⁵ For example, when I was looking at colleges, my counselor told me point blank, "Denise, women get a better education at women's colleges and Black people get a better education at Black colleges, so you should apply to some of both." Terror ran through me at the mere thought of going to a Black college. When I got to Bryn Mawr, I was surprised to hear from friends how their parents had actually forbidden them to apply to Black colleges. Parental disapproval was the second most frequently cited reason for not going to a Black college. The first reason was an amorphous fear of an all-Black educational setting. Like myself, many young People of Color,

it seems, are/were attracted to the idea of the automatic respect derived from attendance at the "right" school. Never mind that this authority is based in class and race hierarchies.

White elitist women's colleges are interesting phenomena, and not nearly so depressing as white elitist men's or co-ed colleges. As I've said, the point of a white elitist college is to indoctrinate students with the feeling that they are important and deserving of authority. This seems to me a great message to give to women and especially Women of Color! So in among the classist, racist, sexist, homophobic messages of white elitist women's institutions, there is an empowering subversion possible, but not inevitable. For Women of Color this right to authority is a very important message, because in this racist patriarchal society we have been taught to get our strongest identification from our racial culture. If we view our strength and support as coming solely from our ethnic culture, then we will be and are vulnerable to the sexism of men. (Compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchy know no color lines.) For Women of Color, learning to value ourselves as women gives us perspective both on our relationships to Men of Color and to women with white-skin privilege. It is unfortunate that it is so often white-identified Women of Color who get to participate in this process, since ethnically identified Women of Color could do so much more with this empowerment.

In the final analysis, I believe that white elitist institutions, especially women's colleges, have a lot to offer Women of Color, but if we go in blind, then we are vulnerable to the profound pressures to "fit in," and thus lose ourselves. I still want security, and I don't think I or anyone should have to sacrifice one's self or culture for it. Join me in the good struggle! ☼

¹ I transferred to a private school and took two senior years because Reaganomics messed up my Social Security. See, it would pay for an extra year of high school but not my first year of college. Ironically, I graduated first in my private school class with the same grades that had put me in only the top 20 percent of my public school class.

² In response to "Are either of your parents white?" one Puerto Rican man said, "Yes, both of them. Puerto Ricans are white." A nearby friend of his wanted to know why I was asking such questions, and my Puerto Rican friend got very angry at my explanation. "Look," he said, "I am not conforming to anyone! My philosophy on life is he who dies with the most toys wins!" He turned his back on me in a huff when I pointed out that such a statement fits beautifully into white middle-class yuppieedom.

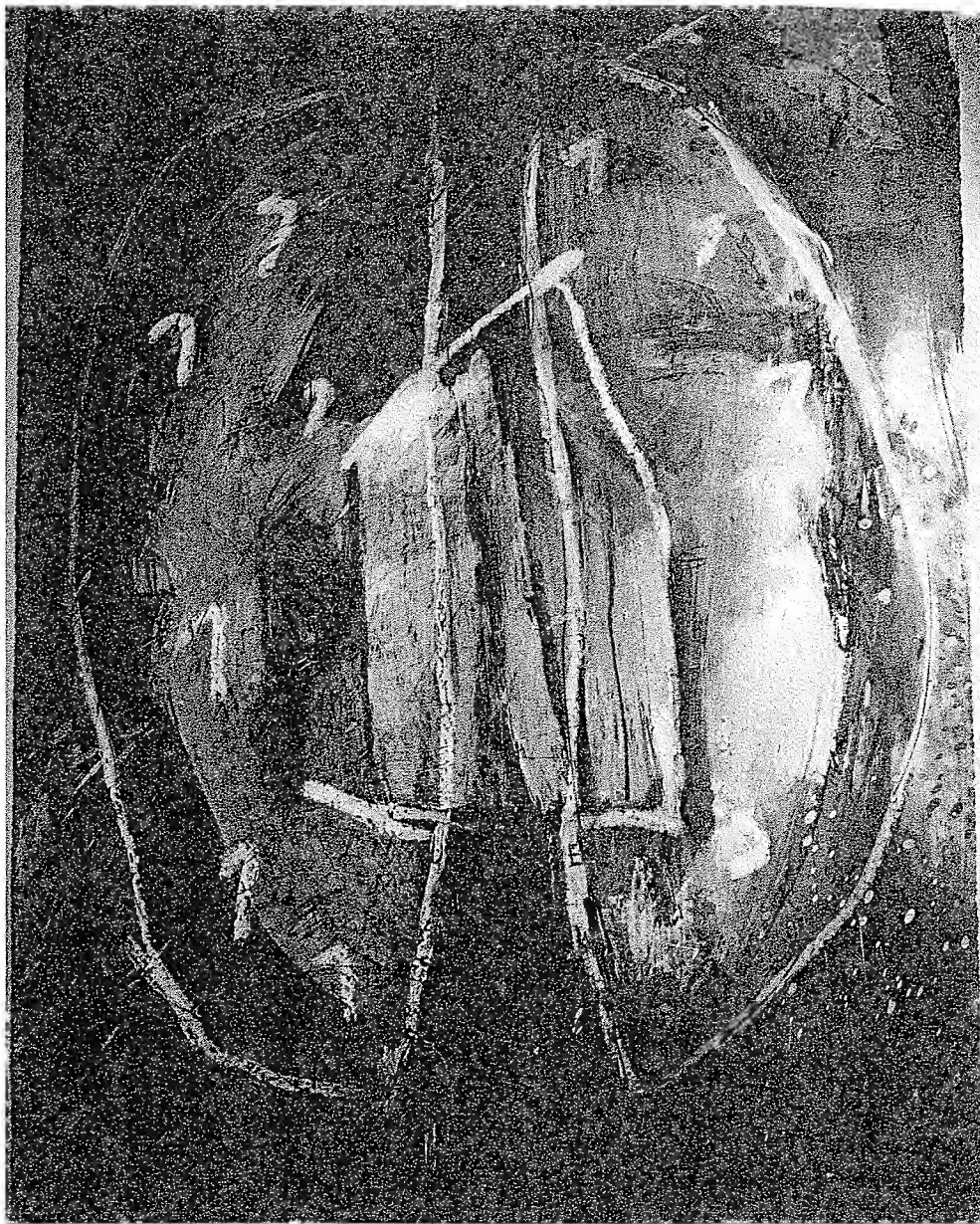
³ Afro-American Blacks' ancestors were brought straight over from Africa. Caribbean Blacks' ancestors experienced a different history in the Caribbean before choosing to come to the United States.

⁴ Afro-Americans' work ethic takes second place to the many problems that have become part of our historical and cultural experience as a result of once being America's slaves, and to the white attitudes and social structures that persist even today.

⁵ This seems to be true among white people also, but it is much more subtle, because so many Euro-Americans have lost so much of their past and identify themselves as just "white." Ethnicity among white people seems to be something to be overcome.

Denise Tuggle graduated from Bryn Mawr College in the spring of 1989. She currently supports herself as a life model but will be moving into the field of social work in the fall of 1990.

large part of our social orientation has been white defined.



Valerie Sivilli *Brainhouse*, 1989, etching, oil, graphite on linen, 38"x50".

Toward a Synthetic Art Education

Two questions must be asked of any program in art education: Does it give students the tools with which to make significant visual statements, and does it provide them with the ability to decipher, function in, and contribute to the world around them? In seeking answers I have located two subject areas that are not currently included in most art school curricula: 1) practice in integrating personal observation and analysis of contemporary society into the activity of artmaking and 2) discussions about the changing relationship of the artist to the culture.

How to form a picture of culture through a study of

SHEILA PINKEL

social, political, and economic factors and integrating the findings into artmaking practice is rarely taught in art departments. It is assumed that art education consists of learning a complement of techniques; rarely does this process include exploration of ideas through personal observation and research. What is particularly distressing about this fragmented situation is that from the very beginning of their education, students are taught to be powerless and disenfranchised and are not given the tools to go beyond the veneer of appearances to gain more depth of insight.

Most of my students do not have the ability to re-

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search a subject and form a picture of the emerging reality. When asked to investigate, they exhibit extreme ignorance about how to proceed, and their explorations are pallid and lack passion. I have become increasingly concerned that this lack of passion and this inability to develop a personal perspective are symptoms of a nonworking educational system. A course that integrates personal observation and library research with socioeconomic and political analysis would provide art students with an opportunity to expand the ways in which they "know" about the world.

Personal observation, experience, and subsequent practice in forming an artwork based on that experience constitute the crucial learning. It is only through students' willingness to encounter the world for themselves and pay attention to their experience in the process that they can really learn how to research for themselves. In the middle of this learning process students often feel overwhelmed and confused, but this is a crucial part of the learning, part of the adventure of not knowing and trying to understand. Ultimately, new recognitions emerge as well as an appropriate final form that can adequately communicate the emerging insights. In my experience, unless students practice this process in school, they don't learn how to do it later on, and the symbols and images they select remain conventional.

Several years ago I taught a class in which students were asked to choose a subject, study it for a semester, photograph it, and finally make an artwork reflecting their understanding and attitudes. Initially the students were frustrated because they did not have any idea how to do library research, how to investigate a subject in depth.

One student selected a fast food chain to study and photograph. On her first day of photographing she found she was not allowed inside the fast food restaurant with her camera. I told her to call the corporate office to see if she could get permission to do her project. After calling over twenty people, none of whom could identify the right person to ask, she was told to call Chicago, which she did, only to discover that they in turn told her to call Los Angeles. In the process she learned that no one knew who was responsible for the rule against photographing.

She then asked about the corporate structure and again could get no clear response. She started talking with workers at the individual facilities and discovered that they did not know anything more than their own job. They had no idea where the cows were bred, grazed, or slaughtered, where the buns came from, or anything about the corporate structure. They certainly didn't know that land in Central America is deforested so that cattle can be grazed for fast food chains in Europe and the U.S. Nor did they think about the wage structure that results in economic benefits for management and investors only. She began to understand the extent of their

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and elements

of this world are

crucial to the full

growth of the

individual artist.

disenfranchisement through disinformation. When she reexamined advertisements of the happy family of workers and customers, she began to understand the gap between the veneer of the public image and the impenetrable monolith of the corporation itself. She had not set out to find this. She had simply wanted to take pictures at a restaurant.

In another instance I asked my students to make portraits of administration, faculty, students, and maintenance staff at the school where I teach. Each person photographed was asked to write about her/his hopes, dreams, and greatest fears. We assembled the final text and images into a book, which was then xeroxed and distributed to participants. This project gave students an opportunity to interface with the various strata of persons at the school and find out something more about them. The students learned about working together on a project and discovered that the finished book made visible a broader reality than any individual's work generated.

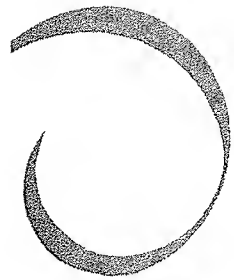
Explorations like those discussed above must be accompanied by classes that expand the student's poetic, intuitive self, the ultimate goal being to develop an integrated person with a frame of reference from which to identify the things she/he values. It is through the development of the spirit of each person that truly synthetic art education can be achieved. A love of form and of beauty and a knowledge of harmony, balance, and the interrelatedness of the beings and elements of this world are crucial to the full growth of the individual artist.

The relationship of the artist to the culture and to the larger fabric of her/his own life is rarely discussed in the classroom. Today art activity is seen as isolated from daily life. It is crucial that art education include a discussion of the integration of the two, which includes staying responsive to cultural concerns, working at times on personal issues, and at times making work that has a social use.

In this regard I find that books such as *Cultures in Contention*, edited by Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, *The Lagoon Cycle* by Helen and Newton Harrison, *The New Photography* by Frank Webster, and *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger are useful in generating a dialogue about the relationship of the artist to the culture.

We can no longer afford to offer an education experience that leads to a passive, impotent relationship with culture and to alienation from our own voices. Students need to learn the tools for making significant, challenging statements and to function as individuals in a complex world. My hope is to prepare students to negotiate, question, and comment upon this world. ☼

Sheila Pinkel is an artist and chairperson of the photography program at Pomona College. She is an international editor of the art/science publication Leonardo and is on the national board of the Society for Photographic Education.



THE



Sara Pasti *The Library*, 1990, litho crayon on lexan.

RECEPTION:

On Learning and Criticism



KAREN J. BURSTEIN

Margaret Lucas Cavendish tosses in her bed. Outside the birds sing, and their high-pitched sounds carry through the still morning air, over the window sill, and to the ears of Margaret. Margaret puts the bird sounds in her dreams, though she never remembers them upon awakening.

And now Margaret wakes. Her eyes pop open and she stares, first at the ceiling, blue in the early light of dawn, then outside the window, where the birds sing.

She seems to remember something she must do. Vague, in a further corner of her mind it is there, like the dreams she never remembers. Yawning softly and rubbing her eyes, Margaret tries to find the thought. She sits for a moment on the edge of her bed. The floor is cold, and on first contact with it she mutters, "The Comical Duchess," quietly to herself, then aloud, as she reaches for the bell on her bedside table.

In a moment she is up, standing on the chill floor. She wonders if she should check the fire in her husband's chamber, for the air is damp, and as William ages, the changes in weather affect his health more and more. But she knows that he has been awake until the early hours of the morning himself, writing, and that the fire is surely fine.

Margaret is brushing her long, dark hair as Sarah, her maid, enters. The ring of Margaret's bell had intruded into her dream. All that Sarah remembers about her dream is the pasture, and that she was on horseback, and a bell called her, loud and reverberating across the fields. She rode fast to its source, pulled as if to a magnet.

"Aah, good Sarah," Margaret greets her. "It was a strange thing. I woke with the Comical Duchess in my head and might bring her to life. And also a commitment I must have, for I seem to recall one. Do you know what that might be?"

"Yes, Lady. Tea with Mister Critik this afternoon."

"Why, of course. Tea with dear Mister Critik. Oh my, must I be ridiculed this day? By the by, we shall see. But let us begin, for Fame's High Tower is waiting!"

And as Margaret dictates, Sarah writes swiftly, pausing occasionally to allow her Lady time to mull over the positioning of words and phrases.

"Sarah! I shall name this *A Comedy of the Apocryphal Ladies*!"

Margaret brings to life, not only the Comical Duchess, but also the Unfortunate Duchess, the Lady True Honour, and the Duke of Inconstancy.

Margaret has her Ladies: Beauty, Love, Wit, Vertue, Happy, and so many others. They drink wine in Margaret's dreams, and then they win wars, women and women both, do heroic deeds, and orate with tremendous wisdom. Margaret stays with her Ladies in her chambers. The wine is spilled on the bed and the orations are on parchment.

Margaret's chambers are in England. Her Ladies are there on the wine-soaked bed. They are also in France, where Margaret once served the Queen Henrietta Maria when the court was in exile there. Margaret was a Lady to the Queen, a Lady-in-waiting, although thought dull and stupid by the court because she never raised her eyes or conversed. As a child Margaret had been so protected by her family that she was shy with strangers and did not know how to behave at court. She wore dresses of her own design, ignoring fashion, and was thought to be eccentric as well as dull.

Two women in a still chamber at dawn, features softened by sleep and the blue-yellow air, hair half-brushed and wildly loose about their shoulders, writing. Sarah drawing the quill furiously across the pages in long and delicate motions, as Margaret bears verse at alarming speed. It is the year 1668.

Hilary has been in the library today, the same library from which Virginia Woolf was barred not so many years ago. Hilary finds an essay by Virginia Woolf in a collection called *The Common Reader*, and Hilary likes it especially. It is called "The Duchess of Newcastle," and Hilary reads it twice.

...there was a wild streak in Margaret, a love of finery and extravagance and fame, which was for ever upsetting the orderly arrangements of nature [p. 103].

Margaret could apply herself uninterruptedly to her writing. She could design fashions for herself and for her servants. She would scribble more and more furiously with fingers that became less and less able to form legible letters [p. 106].

One cannot help following the lure of her erratic and lovable personality as it meanders and twinkles through page after page. There is something noble and Quixotic and high-spirited, as well as crack-brained and bird-witted, about her. Her simplicity is so open; her intelligence so active; her sympathy with fairies so true and tender. She has the freakishness of an elf, the irresponsibility of some non-human creature, its heartlessness, and its charm [pp. 111-112].

Here Hilary pauses. The description of Margaret Cavendish has disintegrated from "noble" to "some non-human creature."

"I must find out more." Hilary spends the afternoon and evening in the library and discovers pieces of Margaret Lucas Cavendish hidden among the stacks and rows of pages: two volumes of her dramatic verses, *Playes* (1662) and *Plays Never Before Printed* (1668). The hand-cut parchment is yellow and bound in worn leather. The portraits of Margaret have been torn away from the front of each volume.

The prologues, epilogues, and dedications are soaked with justifications and apologies. For example:

All the materials in my head did grow. All is my own, and nothing do I owe: Be all that I desire as when I die, My memory in my own works may lye ["A General Prologue to all my Playes," *Playes*].

I pass my time rather with scribbling than writing, with words than wit, not that I speak much, because I am addicted to contemplation [A True Relation of the Birth, Breeding, and Life of Margaret Cavendish, p. 297].

[*Playes*]...tire me with their empty words, dull speeches, long parts, tedious Acts, ill Actors; and the truth is, there is not enough variety in an old play to please me...this Play was writ by a Lady, who on my Conscience hath neither Language, nor Learning, but what is native and natural ["An Introduction," *Playes*].

Again Hilary pauses. "What is language and learning but natural?" she utters quietly to herself, then aloud, only to be hushed by those around her.

Hilary reads some of Margaret's plays—*The Convent of Pleasure* and *Nature's Three Daughters* and one called *Pieces of a Play*, which is just as long as any of the others. She also reads the criticisms of them:

Her works frequently do not meet even the loosest standards of fictional probability and sometimes are incoherent...her printed works are marred by errors of grammar and syntax, erratic punctuation and eccentric spelling [McGuire, p. 203].

"Fictional probability," Hilary repeats the phrase several times to herself. "What a contradiction," she says aloud and is again hushed by those around her. She reads on:

The Duchess was entirely devoid of any dramatic instinct. In all her plays there is hardly a single character with any semblance of life: her characters are mere abstractions, qualities, and humours, uttering the fantastic speeches and quaint conceits which she loved to write [Firth, p. xxvii].

The stream of patronizing words continues, but Hilary's interest is sparked.

Hilary walks among the oak trees and stares at the enormous stone house nearby. The curve of the balcony is strong and perfect. She sees herself in an earlier time as a Great Lady, pensively or blissfully gazing at the landscape from one of those balconies. She moves closer to the house. The dim light of a fire glows across the sill of

a second-story window. Hilary thinks she can make out two women, hair loose and wild about their shoulders. But the heat of the fire wafts over the image and it is gone.

The sun will soon be fully risen. Hilary has walked all night, journeying from the library where Margaret Lucas Cavendish hid among the pages to this stone house where, centuries before, she used to live.

And now the fire from inside that second-story room consumes the blue-yellow air outside its window and travels down the drying leaves of the oaks. Encircling Hilary, the flames fuel themselves with pages of Lady Cavendish that have yet to be written.

Hilary joins the flame in a consummation surpassing the boundaries of time, because, she realizes, they do not exist.

Mister Critik is ten feet tall, and his eyes sweep Fame's High Tower. His eyes are the broom that cleanses

the Tower of its dust, or what they see to be dust, even when the dust is sparkled confetti. Mister Critik likes neither sparkles nor confetti amid the grayness of his decor. One shade of color, whether it be gray or black or burgundy. For him, a brightly lit party subverts the true nature of life. "Reason! Reason! Reason!" he shouts from his balcony. He must watch the way he leans, for the railing is loose.

"They have told me to lay out the table with prunes and water," he claims, "and thus I have." And tea, for it is tea-time and a guest is expected.

Only half-expecting the Lady Cavendish to make an appearance (for she is, by choice, a recluse), Mister Critik prepares a dose of prune tea, which he does not quite finish gulping down before the front door gives notice. The man feels slightly askew and hurriedly stows his prune tea in a cupboard, next to and slightly behind a volume of criticism. Just as the Duchess of Newcastle, the Lady Margaret Lucas Cavendish, breezes in, with all the grace of a fairy misplaced from the stage, he closes the glass door and turns. "My, she is beautiful," Mister Critik thinks, not for the first time.

Bashfully, yet with a certain aura of confidence, the Lady steps to the right, allowing someone, apparently a companion, to pass. Mister Critik catches the prune tea just as it travels back up his esophagus.

Margaret's friend is surely a woman, though Mister Critik is daunted and appalled by her costume. She wears trousers, like a man, and boots that fasten

just above the ankles. She wears an odd-looking shirt of a loosely knitted assortment of colors and textures, which stops just short of her hips. The woman's hair is cropped about the ears, and the whole effect is somewhat bewildering. "Another character from a drama of questionable ingenuity," thinks Mister Critik, who has been told that he is good at thinking "Surely the Lady Cavendish dreamt her up."

"Lady Cavendish, my dear Duchess, I am unspeakably pleased to receive you as my guest. And, of course, this pleasure extends to your companion."

"I return the pleasure, Mister Critik, and would like to introduce you to my new friend, Hilary. Hilary is unfamiliar with this part of our world, and so, to educate her, I have invited her to join us. I trust that poses no problem."

"By all means, no," says Mister Critik, and motions for the two women to sit on the sofa by the fire. Mister Critik follows: he always follows his guests.

Lady Cavendish wears a gown of rose-colored taffetta trimmed with black lace, low-cut across the bosom and flowing at the wrists. Her hair is piled extraordinarily over her brow, tendrils hanging along each temple in perfect curls. When she turns to Mister Critik and hands him the latest volume of her dramas and one of her poems, he smiles, accepting them both with the utmost honor, or so it seems.

Much later he says (aside), "Your fairy poems are in the league of Herrick and Mennis, perhaps even Shakespeare. But your dramatic verses are horrendous—no sense of the three unities or of decorum. And one S-shaped verse, even if it exists, which I highly doubt, would compose an entire scene."

And the Lady Cavendish, thrice noble and illustrious Duchess of Newcastle, responds (not so aside), "I did much pleasure and delight these Playes to make; For all the times my Playes a making were, My brain the stage, my thoughts were acting there."

The man has no response to give, and so he smiles and offers more tea. He himself goes without, awaiting the moment of the women's departure when he will have the opportunity to finish the prune tea stowed behind his volume of criticism in the glass cupboard. For he knows that if he and Margaret were alone on a desert island, and Margaret made coconut faces with three eyes and no nose and dried milk for a mouth, she would be living by her imagination, and the art rules of coconut face-making would be as the snow is to the tropics.

But Mister Critik will not admit this, even to himself. And so he smiles.

Dusk falls due to Mister Critik dulling the flame with his eyes, sweeping the sparkles off Fame's High Tower and absorbing them into the black hole of his decor. Someday the vacuum might spit them back out again, or perhaps somebody will enter and find them. The latter seems more likely.

Hilary must return to the library; she has work to do. Margaret must go to rest in her Tower. She will find a place to hide amidst the pages. Margaret hands Hilary a volume of writing she dared not give to Mister Critik. The two embrace before they part.

Mister Critik cannot sleep and gulps prune tea, inebriating himself. In this state he attempts to feed the liquid to the manuscript of plays given him by the Duchess. But the manuscript won't drink and instead gets stained a bloody burgundy and drips onto the gray carpet. Panicked, he thinks of a way to protect the carpet and sofa, for his things are expensive. Like a suckling child, he brings the manuscript to his mouth, but more quickly than he is able to suck the red liquid, the flame leaps from the fireplace, drying everything. He continues sucking, inhaling the dried flakes of prune tea, then the carpet, the sofa, the manuscript, and eventually even the fire itself.

Thus dies Mister Critik, consumed by the flame he had always ignored.

Margaret sleeps soundly and Mister Critik dies painfully and Hilary awakes. Hilary's eyes pop open. In front of her are rows and stacks of books, dull brown in the fluorescent light. Imprinted on the pages of Margaret Lucas Cavendish's writing seems to be an image of her own face. She feels the burn of forgotten words branded into her flesh.

It is late. The security guards pass through the building, reminding people that soon the doors will close. Vowing never to get trapped inside—or outside—a building. Hilary packs up her things. But first she writes a list and tucks this list into a volume of writings she did not have upon entering the library: *Description of a New World* by Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. Though it was published in 1668, the pages are white and unwrinkled. List and book among her belongings, Hilary is now ready to leave.

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Karen J. Burstein wrote this essay while a student at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass. It is a response to the deletion of women writers from the canon.



Carol Clements and Company From *A Timely Existence*, February 1990, presented at Dance Theater Workshop, New York, Photo: Larry Bair.

Critics

1

Critics say my collages are not fine art,
just bits and pieces of other people's work.
But I say that artists always borrow,
and if they borrow well,
when we view their work
we will always feel
a thrill of recognition,
as we see something familiar
that we have never seen before.

Critics say my poems are not well crafted,
but I say that it was never my intention
to be artful or crafty,
not if that has anything to do
with the straight-laced teachers I had in school,
who refused to look at emotions,
unless I dressed them like fancy dolls
in metaphors and similes, meter, rhyme and reasons.
Nothing naked, *please*, and certainly no genitals!

I *use* criticism when it's useful.
One poet friend said to me:
This poem is too short
to say all you want it to say.
She was right, and I went on
to write a much better, longer poem.
This was good advice: not telling me
what to write about or how to do it,
or implying that I'd never get it right
because I lacked some inherent talent,
or that really *she* could say it
better than I ever could.

At its best, though, criticism
is always a very sharp tool:
remember never to offer or grasp
the blade instead of the handle.

At its worst, criticism becomes
a self-serving authority figure,
a nosy landlord living inside our heads,
getting rich on our fear and self-doubt.
He peeks in our windows when we are naked;
he knocks on our door at midnight,
demanding we pay the back rent;
then he says we're no good anyway
and threatens to kick us out in the cold.

AMY EDGINGTON

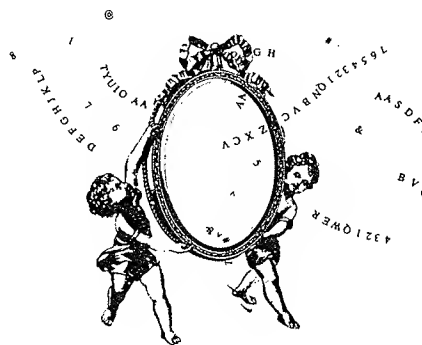
2

As I see it, what I'm here to do
is to tell the truth
in any voice it wants to use—
a song, a howl, or a whisper.
The hardest thing about art
is just to do it without question.
To be an artist means to dare
to paint and write lots of bad stuff
that is only fit for the compost heap
(but nothing beats compost for starting seeds).

Being *judged* an artist in this world
means only showing the people
who have power and money
exactly what they want to see.
And how original is that?
It's the oldest trick in the book,
if not the oldest profession.

So please don't tell me to take art lessons
or creative writing courses.
I don't have the time or money,
and I have no room to internalize
academic opinions: my head is too full
of my own ideas that demand to be seen and heard
like anybody else's children.
Anyway, I never learned art in school.
I learned that only silence
will satisfy every critic.
But I failed to find silence
bearable.

May 1987



Amy Edgington is a forty-three-year-old disabled lesbian, writer, and collage artist living in the South.

Beating the Odds

EMMA AMOS



MOVE to a city with galleries, museums, and art schools.

LEARN to eat and live VERY cheaply.

GET financial aid from doting parents, aunts, family friends.

FIND work in a job that allows some flexibility in hours, such as sales, framing, gallery sitting, conservation, or design.

MAKE time to make art. Get up early on Saturdays and Sundays and work from 9:00 to 3:00 before doing shopping, laundry, etc. NO EXCUSES!

MAKE a weekly appointment to go to galleries, museums, experimental dance, theatre.

CREATE a group of artist friends to exchange studio visits, show slides, share work space, start an art magazine.

TAKE slides of your work every three months. Take at least a dozen shots of each work so you don't have to make copies right away. Keep your résumé up to date. Mail your slides to alternative-space slide banks and galleries that show young, unknown artists. Send a SASE for their return.

APPLY for scholarships to the good summer art schools.

GET accepted to three group shows your first year out.

CURATE a show—including your own work, of course—and find an organization to host the show for free. Invite your friends, the press, and galleries.

JOIN the College Art Association. Great job listings.

LOOK in art magazines and newspapers for pertinent articles, opportunities, and grant listings.

APPLY for your home-state's artists grants as soon as you're eligible.

MATCH your work to the galleries and curators who show work that seems responsive to your own. Get on their mailing lists and GO TO ALL THEIR OPENINGS.

APPLY for studio space in funded programs and artist-in-residence programs.

BEATING THE ODDS FOR BA, BFA, AND MFA ART MAJORS.

Fewer than five out of 100 art school graduates are making art ten years later. That's a lousy statistic. Despite the many artists we know, see, and read about, there are enormous numbers more who educated themselves to be artists but gave up somewhere along the way.

LIVE with or marry an artist. Two can cover more ground than one.

KEEP up with your classmates. Exchange names and addresses, including parents' addresses in case of moves.

KEEP a file of artists' colonies, summer programs, and people who can and will write good references for you.



DON'T walk your slides around to galleries. You'll get too discouraged. Send them.

DON'T stay in the same dead-end job for more than a year. Now that you've established an artmaking rhythm, you need to address lifetime goals. Prepare to start training for a specific job. Examples: Graduate school for teaching, conservation, museum work. Grad school or special classes for graphics, textile design, industrial design, computer art, display.

DON'T wait until the last term of school to plan for your art career.

DON'T call your old professors, the art office, or the dean to help you find a job at graduation.

DON'T 1) live in a no-art town or 2) with an unsupportive roommate, and (3) try not to live at home if at all possible.

DON'T overprice your work.

DON'T frame your work unless you're showing it at a gallery with a chance for sales. Use reusable frames. Keep your sizes uniform.

DON'T forget to make sculpture portable and packable.

DON'T GIVE UP.

THEN IF WE ARE TO SET
WOMEN TO THE SAME TASKS AS
MEN WE MUST TEACH THEM THE
SAME THINGS. THEY MUST HAVE
THE SAME TWO BRANCHES OF
TRAINING FOR MIND AND BODY
AND ALSO BE TAUGHT THE ART
OF WAR AND THEY MUST RECEIVE
THE SAME TREATMENT.

SOME OF SAMENESS OR DIFFERENCE HE MEANT AND IN ANY
I SUSPECT THESE NOTIONS AND CONNOTATIONS WERE TO BE
DEFINED AS DIFFERENCE IN THE SAME.

... HE NEVER MEANT ANY AND EVERY SORT OF SAMENESS
OR DIFFERENCE IN NATURE, BUT THE SORT THAT WAS RE-
LEVANT TO THE QUESTIONS IN QUESTION. HE MEANT, F-
OR INSTANCE, THAT A MAN AND A WOMAN HAVE THE SAME
NATURE IF BOTH HAVE A TALENT FOR MEDICINE: WOMEN

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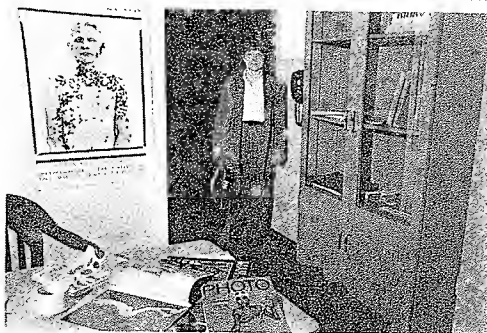
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Nancy Spero Socrates (detail), 1979, painting, typewriter collage, handprinting on paper, 20"x9". Photo: David Reynolds.

Nancy Spero is one of the founding members of A.I.R. Gallery. Her most recent project is an installation at Smith College Museum of Art, Notes in Time on Women, and wallprinting piece, To Soar II.

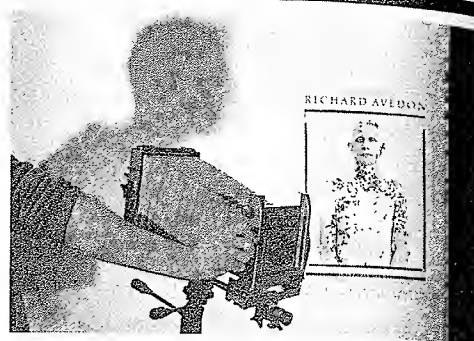
The Interview: desperate fear, grotesque pay inequity, and conflicting



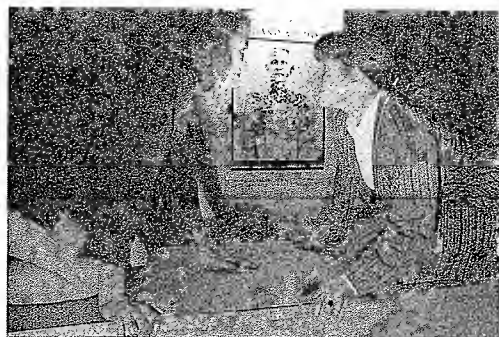
*S*he knew that the department needed to hire a woman because there was only one other on the faculty.



*S*he imagined her interview with the chairman and considered how she might best present herself.



*T*he chairman's reputation was well established.



*S*he knew the problems an interview entailed and wondered how she would maneuver.



*H*ow to edit her portfolio to make her work comprehensible to him?
COMPOSITION, CONTENT,
FEMINISM, FORMALISM,
MARXISM, MODERNISM ...



*S*he imagined herself to be a model instructor...



*H*ow to come across without coming on?



*I*n other aspects of her life she found a variety of solutions to this problem.



*S*he realized that the chairman did not share her values. How could she communicate her qualifications without her politics?

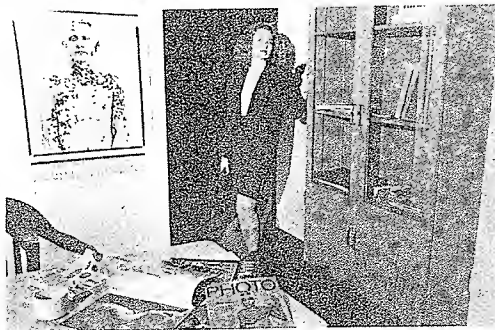
*by Leigh Kane
and Diane Pontius*

Leigh Kane is an artist/activist/educator who teaches media studies at Carleton College near Minneapolis.

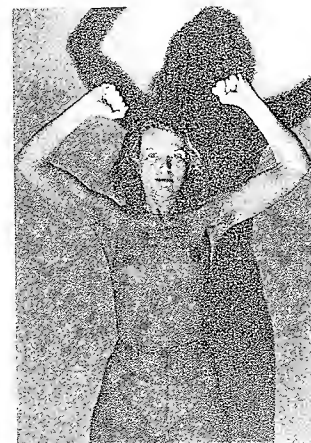
How she struggled against outrageous odds, desires in her search for meaningful employment



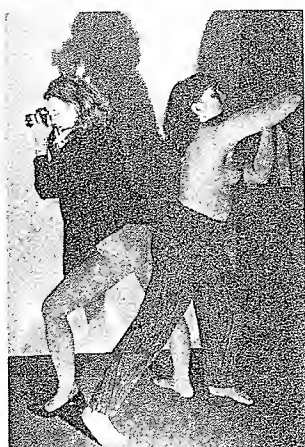
He knew that the department was under pressure to hire a woman. He thought about the prospect with some anticipation. It had been weeks since his last affair.



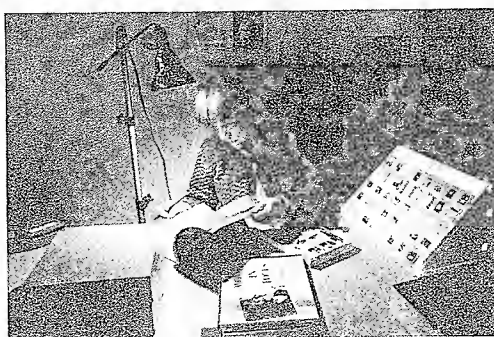
She was intelligent, articulate, and determined.



She was hungry for the job and hoped she could convince him of her skills.



... capable of the varied responsibilities of a full-time position.



The job required extensive teaching experience, an impressive exhibition record, willingness to work with colleagues, and numerous departmental duties.



Did she measure up to the expectations?



Her alliances with others offered her support and inspired her work.

Diane Pontius is a photographer, video artist, and teacher currently living in Philadelphia.



Are she reveal to him the complexities of her life ...



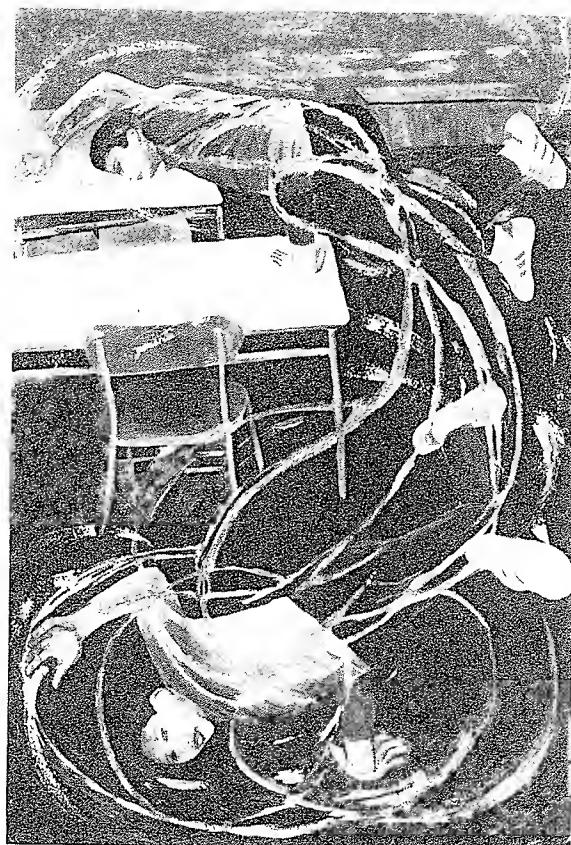
the activism, the women's caucus, the poster collective, the reading group, the writing, the family, the child, the lover ... ?

The Art of Education



several years ago I decided to go to New York to study dance professionally. After teaching at a university, I was looking forward to being in an environment that values learning with the body and studying in a field where women have been visible and important, historically. At the same time, I was terrified. To my mind, I did not fit the typical image of a dance student, and at the age of thirty I had never studied dance full time. After considering several studios, I finally chose the Nikolais/Louis Dance Lab because of their belief that given time, work, and guidance, anybody can learn to dance. I was also impressed by the continuity of the school's teaching staff, which spans three generations of dancers, including Hanya Holm who is in her nineties and one of the pioneers of modern dance in America. The following are journal excerpts about my experience in the studio and my research on the history of women in dance.

I had my first class with Hanya and was totally taken by her. "Mostly fear and familiarity," she said, "that's what keeps us from doing. First we must undo all the



Brahma Yassky *Classroom #3*, 1985, oil on canvas, 72"x48".

Brahma Yassky is a New York painter who has just finished her first film, Frozen Moment. The paintings reproduced here were inspired by teaching art for one year to junior high school kids in the East Village.

Nos of our education. You have already learned enough. Now you must learn to give up, to make room. It takes courage, but there is no other way."

There is much to learn from the body, and not just dance either. The physicality of our selves is basic to everything we do, yet it is one of the most neglected aspects of our upbringing and education, which often serve to trap the reflexes and cauterize the instincts. Bringing those back to life is, as I'm finding out, an excruciating process, physically and psychically.

Briefly I felt my whole body thinking—a moment of vibration or alertness, not just in the head but in the legs, the torso, the arms. A sense of radiating outward from inner movement. A glimmer that blood, muscle, and bone are knowledgeable and sentient: consciousness in the curves of muscles, the rushing of blood, the exchange of fluids and air. Cellular knowledge ...

In some ways the approach to the body is very male: analyze, analyze, analyze,

and apply the laws. Pull in, push in, lift up—the desired image is definitely male, androgynous at best, but never female with curves and roundness, which are considered "appropriate only for the Middle Eastern belly dancer," our teacher tells us. Such a contrast to the way Rina Singha spoke of her training in Indian dance in the video "Women in Asian Dance." "We worked on two pieces, four hours a day for six months, repeating them over and over again, sometimes with slight variations and recitation of the rhythmic patterns. In this way the piece and its timing became a part of our body." She then demonstrated one of her practice pieces; it could not have been more than five minutes in all. How I long to train in this way, slowly repeating what we need to know from the inside. Our training is done much too quickly, and we are not allowed the time to really sense the place of movement in the body.

This learning is difficult and painful, physically and psychologically, as I touch habits deeply embedded in my muscles. Yet I've come to be grateful for the pain,



EDUCATING

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RACHEL VIGIER

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my body," I said. "Do not let your mind dominate your body," she replied. "The mind is there to clarify what the body will do. Trust your body."

More and more I am seeing/sensing how deeply we as women internalize the fact that our bodies are not our own, how deeply the colonization goes. What do we need to free ourselves from the inside? What are the conditions for the freedom of the body? It is as if we had to recompose our most basic posture to find the point or source of all other possibilities.

Looking at one of the young women today and thinking, Yes, that's me ten years ago if only ... I have to be careful not to fall into bitterness or pity. I am where I am and there is nothing to do about that except work harder. Cleaning out channels, bones, tendons, ligaments, socket joints, hinge joints. Refinishing the antique lovingly

Rachel Vigier lives and works in New York City. She is currently at work on a collection of essays about women, dance, and the body entitled Gestures of Genius.

even to watch for it, because it means changes are underway and sensation is being developed.

The deeper I go into women and dance the more I recognize myself, get glimpses of what has been lost but is still alive in my instincts and in the living layer of my body. Yesterday I was reading about Kabuki theater, where women are prohibited from formal participation despite the fact that they created the Kabuki dance form. Predictably, this form was taken away from them by men, and they were outlawed from their own creation. Yet a germ of their sensibility remains in the integrity of the form, the wholeness of the dances, which do not fall into abstraction. Here in the geste I had a moment of recognition, a tugging in my body saying, Yes, we passed here, as I remembered what has fallen into silence, can no longer be said but is still entrusted to the body.

Today speaking with Hanya I told her I am confused about the relation between mind and body. "My mind doesn't know what to do with itself when I listen to



Brahma Yassky *Classroom#4*, 1985, oil on canvas, 60"x60".



Learning to Play

JOAN HERBST SHAPIRO

T

his year I had the lucky experience of learning to play the *shekere* (shay-ker-ray) in a class led by Madeleine Yayodele Nelson, founder of the performing group Women of the Calabash.

The *shekere* is a West African instrument that comes from the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Used as a powerful instrument to call spiritual forces, it is played for religious ceremonies and occasions. The instrument is made from a hollowed-out gourd, or calabash, which serves as a drum. Beads strung on a net encircling the gourd add a rattle sound:

DA dee DA dee DA dee, DA DA DA dee
DA dee DA dee DA dee, DA DA DA dee

Vibrant rhythms! DA—the bass resounds like a heartbeat from the hollow interior of the calabash. The *dee* or *che* is a rattle sound created by the beads. The gourd is held semihorizontally between the player's hands. As it is pushed by one hand and received by the other, the beads fly up and snap as they hit the gourd. *Che!* The bass is sounded by either hand, hitting the calabash as it is thrust back and forth between the player's hands. Hearing the instrument for the first time, I felt strongly drawn to its power and energy.

In West Africa the *shekere* is played in a variety of settings. Traditionally the instrument is used as backup in a group of drums. The original contribution of Women of the Calabash is the use of *shekeres* played together as the featured instrument. In this context one clearly hears both the rattle and bass voices. At the time Women of the Calabash began playing, this was an untried idea. Its musical appeal can be measured by the fact that currently it has been adopted by other musical groups.

Women of the Calabash is made up of Afro-American women who play a wide selection of African instruments: *shekeres*, drums, *balafon*, steel pans, and rhythm sticks. The music they play includes traditional and contemporary African pieces as well as

original compositions that refer to African and Afro-American cultures. Sometimes they combine diverse elements, such as a contemporary rock song sung in the style of South African workers' choirs. Their presentation is a spectacular mix of percussive music, vocals, movement, and dance.

Performances often begin with a chant, inviting the audience to participate—"You're gonna clap your hands. You're going to sing and dance." The liveliness of the rhythms, with beautiful spacious melodies spreading over all, is entrancing. Vocals complement percussive rhythms. Sometimes there is a dramatic rhythmic contrast between the first and second parts of a song.

At the end of one concert, Madeleine explained that the musicians were members of a class she taught called *Egbe Omo Shekere* ("Children of the Calabash"). She said that the class met every Sunday in a West Village studio and that anyone could come. I decided to go.

The following fall I find myself in Studio 10 in the cavernous Westbeth basement. I feel shy, yet I want to connect to this music, so I join the circle of musicians and stand up as part of the group. No one is more amazed than I. I am carried away. Clapping my hands and stamping my feet I think that this music is like...yes, like pure affirmation. If ever I were seriously sick, this music would heal me.

The aura is welcoming, playful, but attention is rapt. Introductions are informal, occurring after the warm-ups that begin the class. We go around the circle, calling out our first names. The attitude toward time and attendance is relaxed. Class is scheduled from 11:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., but usually begins a little late and runs on after 2:00. People come when they can and leave when they have to.

The music consists of complementary rhythmic patterns: bass, rattle, silence. A chorus of *shekeres* talking to each other. The sound is intense as it vibrates off the cement walls.



Madeleine communicates via gestures and expressions as well as words, projecting enthusiasm or delight in the music, showing off skill, or miming sleepiness if the rhythm is flagging. She can be clownish—imitating my overly serious expression until we break up laughing.

The circle of the class is constant, though filled by different people each week. Some are regulars, others newcomers; some are beginners, others experienced musicians. People of European descent are made as welcome as everyone else. Our youngest member is an eight-year-old girl who comes with her mother.

The class is like a gift—the gift of a more life-affirming culture. It provides a new way of learning, which contradicts the negativity of many of my pre-

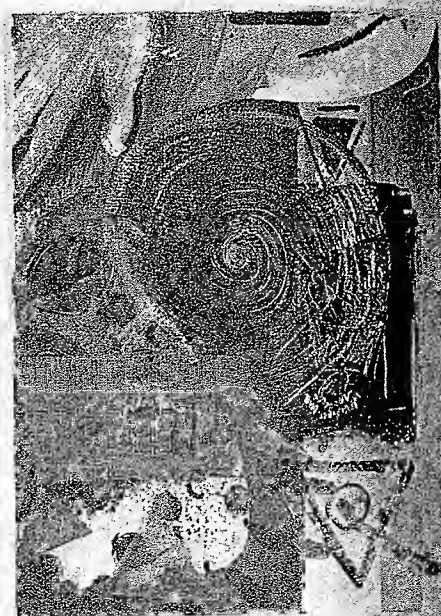
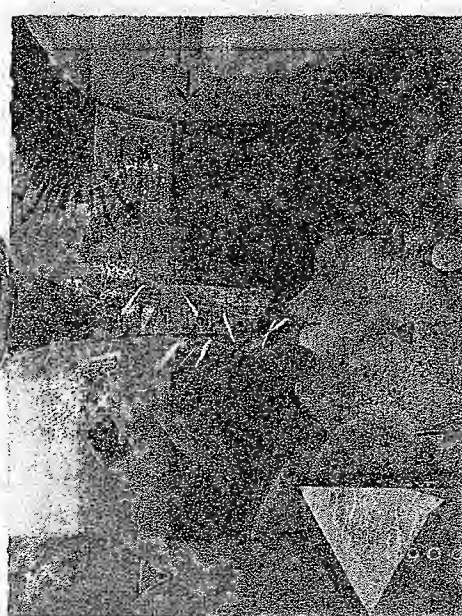
vious learning experiences. When I ask Madeleine if the class is patterned on traditional African teaching methods, she replies that she does not know. Essentially she has developed her method of teaching in response to things she has found difficult in her own learning experiences. She says, "Most musicians have endured a lot of put-down experiences, and they teach that way." In this class the flow of music is never interrupted by criticism. No one is ever told that they're wrong. Someone just shows them something they can do while the music continues. There is no testing, no putting people on the spot. Madeleine likes to create situations in which people can enjoy playing, whether it's in the circle of the class or at a low-key performance or through group participation in a parade.

Classes are not sequential but rather an ongoing continuum in which beginners and experienced players participate together. This permits people to go at their own pace, to pick up as much as they can as fast or as slowly as they can. "When I first was learning," Madeleine comments, "drummers would tell me, 'Stand back and play the one.' There's so much ego involved among musicians. It limits what they are willing to show you." She says that she is not interested in students imitating her style but in giving them a basic vocabulary of rhythms and patterns with which they can devise their own language.

I strongly sense an intangible spiritual presence in this class. While Yoruba tradition and spirituality aren't specifically discussed, they provide a founda-

tion for much of the music we play. Various classroom experiences, in which students were often pitted against one another. I found this class both illuminating and healing—in contrast to "educational" experiences I've had elsewhere.

I believe that methods and systems of education express the values of the people or cultures that create them. The implicit value underlying most American education, it seems, is how to get ahead in the material world in competition with everyone else who is trying to get ahead. The spiritual basis of the shekere class is unity, not competition. It is assumed that when one joins the circle, he or she becomes part of the whole. Within that whole, each individual is treated with deep respect, appreciation, and support. The class is founded on values of loving the



Kabuya P. Bowens *The Final Call*, 1989, gouache and m/m papers, triptych, each panel 12"x17". Photo: Glenn Saffo.

Presently working with the Studio in a School Association as an artist/instructor, Kabuya P. Bowens is also spending nine months as artist-in-residence at Longwood (Bronx Council for the Arts). She is a native of Miami and has exhibited in both the New York and Miami areas.

tion for much of the music we play.

The African model of music-making is communal in its orientation. This differs from classical Western tradition, which treats music as a highly specialized activity in which musicians and audience are strictly separated. As in African musical tradition, my shekere class is a social and participatory activity in which individual development is supported by the group. If I am doing well, I sense the appreciation of the whole group. If I get lost, someone will smile from across the circle, catch my eye, and demonstrate a rhythm I can play. The first time this happened I was astonished. This experience of group support was strikingly different from most of my pre-

music, having fun together, paying attention, developing skills, and making a contribution. I would like to see these values more prevalent in our society and learning situations.

Madeleine teaches because she really has some-

thing to give directly to people—she loves turning them on to the instrument. I go because I love the music and want to connect to its power and energy. It isn't about getting ahead or competition or improving one's marketability or preparation for something. It's about playing together.

Joan Herbst Shapiro is an artist and environmental educator who lives in New York City. Her current work is concerned with healing our alienation from ourselves, one another, and the natural/spiritual world.

Dangerous Discussions

CAROL WOLFE KONEK

In 1987, during the three-week International Women's Decade Forum and Conference in Nairobi, several of us gathered at night to discuss all we had taken in throughout the day. We had listened to migrant women, refugee women, and women in exile. We had listened to women outraged by sex tourism, bride-burning, and female circumcision. We talked late into the night, trying to resolve feelings evoked by revelations of atrocities that implicated us all.

One evening Anna came to the room exclaiming, "You won't believe what happened to Dana today. 'Dame Nita Barrow asked the women in the international lesbian group to give up their booth. She said no lesbian issues would be debated at the forum, and no lesbian materials could be handed out.'"

"How can the conference censor anyone?" Billie asked.

"The women who were staffing the booth didn't ask any questions. They just moved their materials to the grassy square."

No lesbian workshops had been listed in the program. I wasn't surprised that the planners were worried about the response of the Kenyan government to this topic, considering the missionary influence on education. It had become increasingly apparent that every government had a vested interest in perpetuating its own form of female subordination and that the preservation of silence was essential to this purpose. "So what happened?" I asked. "Did the women object to their treatment?"

"No. They sat passively on the ground in the square. Several guards and a crowd

of several hundred people gathered around them. Young men started asking Dana questions about this 'strange Western sexual practice.' She told them she was a lesbian and talked about the emotional basis for the preference and the political and cultural biases against the preference. She was quite articulate. They were fascinated."

"And the police were there all this time?" Billie asked.

"They were watching the crowd to make sure nothing got out of control. And of course they were also listening. At one point they took several young men away."

"Do you suppose the police detained those men? Is it illegal to listen to such discussions?" I asked, remembering my friend Njinga's story of his father's detention, the deplorable conditions in the jails, and the impossibility of getting legal defense, whether guilty or innocent.

Anna thumbed through *Sisterhood Is Global* until she found the laws on homosexuality in the Kenyan chapter. "'It is illegal under the Penal Code (Sec. 162) to have carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature and is punishable by fourteen years imprisonment.' The law does not specifically mention lesbianism." ...

"Anna, you must tell Dana to be careful," I said, realizing as I spoke how cautious and conventional I sounded. But I vividly recalled the Mexico City conference in 1975 and my first realization that many governments see the women's movement as a threat to nationalism. My companion and I were certain we were being followed as we drove from Mexico City to Oklahoma

City and later discovered that we had acquired FBI files at the conference.

Anna told us Dana had spoken for almost five hours, that she was undaunted, that she was speaking from the heart of a silence many women had occupied for years. Dana became a liberator, a folk hero before their eyes. People were now dropping in to Dana's room to congratulate her. My own thought was that she might now be viewed as a threat.

The next day I was attracted to a cluster of animated people in the center of the square, and I recognized the women from the lesbian information booth. A young man politely inquired if he could ask me a question. I responded that he could.

"If you please, would you mind explaining to me and my friends this lesbian way of life?"

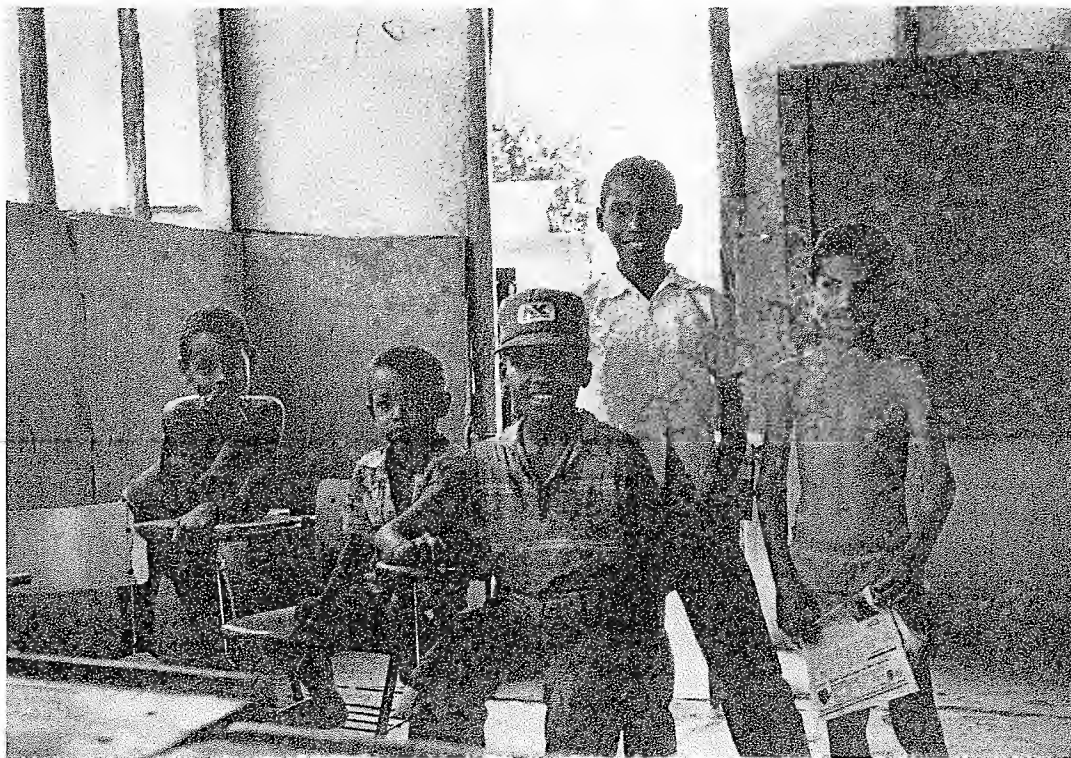
I was charmed by the man's curious, courteous diction and realized that the defensiveness and hostility that might infuse such a question posed by a Western man were absent in this man's demeanor. "I don't mind discussing this with you. What would you like to know?" By now there were fifteen or twenty young people, mostly men, but also a few women, on the outskirts of the group.

"How is it that lesbians can make love?"

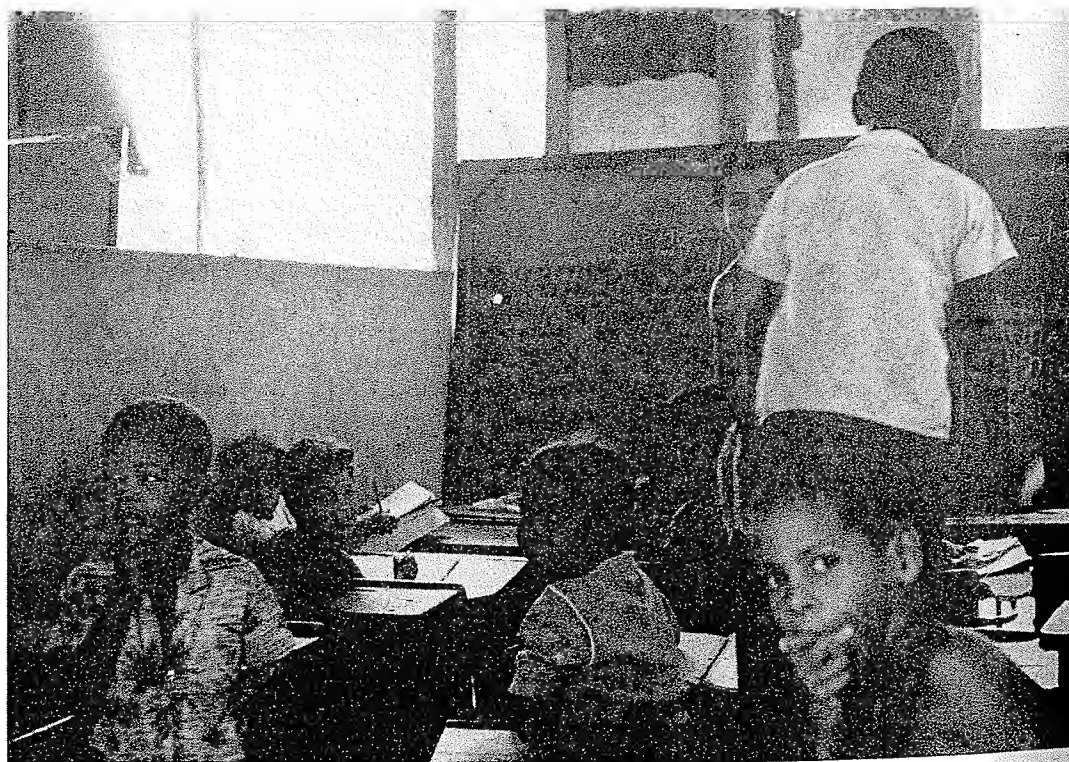
"They can make love as any two people can make love."

Several of the young men stifled their laughter. "Oh, no, they can't," said the leader.

I plunged ahead, determined to be gentle. "Making love is possible between any two people who love each other. Many men



Alex Stavitsky Dominican Republic, June 1989, photograph.



Alex Stavitsky Dominican Republic, June 1989, photograph.

Currently a photo assistant, Alex Stavitsky wants to use photography to challenge preconceived ideas of femininity, politics, people, and their various cultures. She was in Nicaragua for the 1990 elections.

believe that penetration is the most important part of the sex act." I paused, hoping they understood. There were several nods. "But penetration is not always the most important or pleasing part of lovemaking for a woman. In our culture there are many women who believe men are too interested in penetration. Lovemaking goes too fast for the woman when the man is thinking only of reaching his goal." I paused again. "Is it the same in your culture?"

"But without that, there is nothing," added another man.

"A man's point of view may be different, but think of making love from a woman's point of view. Women like to be embraced. They like to be held and caressed and to feel that they are precious to the one who loves them."

"Yes, we know."

"They like to speak and to be understood. Some women tell me they are conquered, like territory—taken, without regard for their feelings or their response."

A man who had been silent spoke softly. "Yes I have heard women say so."

"While we are talking like this, there is something else I would like to discuss with you," I added, searching for tact. "In my country women are often abused by men. Sometimes fathers do not value their daughters. Men beat their wives, and also their children."

"This is also true in our country," said a young woman who had listened attentively.

"From what I am learning at this conference, I fear this is a problem everywhere. You ask me what lesbians do. What two women do, I am told, for I am not a lesbian, is to love each other with tenderness and concern for the pleasure of each other."

"And this trouble between men and women... you think it makes women prefer making love with other women?"

"No. Not necessarily. Women who love women are not rejecting men. They are loving women because they find women beautiful and loving and interesting."

"But you think women are afraid of men?"

asked yet another man, determined that a woman must be reacting to something.

"In our country there is often disrespect between men and women. Daughters often learn to fear their fathers and then also find they cannot depend on the respect of other men. Men in our culture sometimes make disgusting remarks to women in public places. We have music and movies that equate sex and violence, and there are men who rape, brutalize, and sometimes kill women. No woman in our culture is safe from this violence."

"In our culture some of these things are happening, too."

"I understand from talking to women at this conference, I continued, that until recently a man had the right to beat his wife, and that laws against wife-beating are not always enforced, even now."

Agreement from my listeners. "It is the same in my country. We are a long way from arriving at understanding between men and women. We are looking for ways to stop the violence and create understanding. Perhaps someday men will listen to women and try to understand what they think, how they feel, and what they want."

"And then there will be no more lesbian life-styles?" came the question.

"No, no. There will still be lesbian life-styles. When women are no longer territory to be conquered or property to be owned, they will be free to love whomever they please. Women will then be free to choose love. When men respect women's right to choose, they will no longer be offended by this choice."

"What about religious and moral laws which must be obeyed?" asked my first questioner. I realized I was confronting a very polite wall.

"Most religions teach the principles of love and respect, and yet many marriages are based on contempt and abuse. Morality would require that people are never required to submit to intimacy with someone who does not love and respect them." Only now did I become uneasy that the guard

behind me seemed to be moving closer.

"You would ignore the matter of sin?" asked the second man, speaking somewhat more aggressively than before.

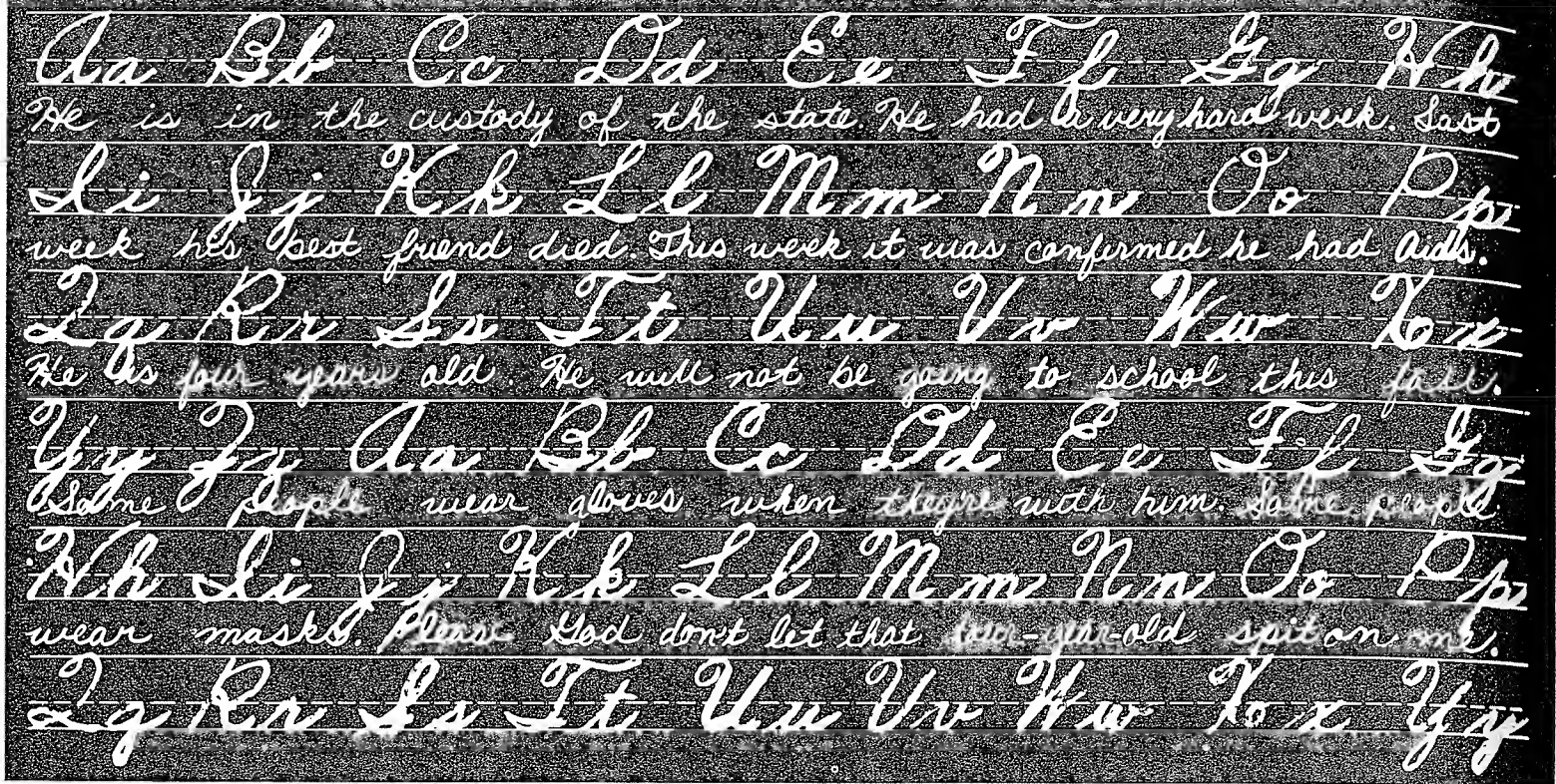
"I am saying that love between two women cannot be a sin, that only violence can be a sin," I concluded, aware of the pounding of my pulse and of my anger at the indoctrination of these men who had seemed so sweet and polite until I reached the bedrock of their belief.

When I met Billie and Anna in the Peace Tent at the end of the day, I confessed I now understood how Dana was compelled to answer the questions of the Kenyans and that I too had become their instructor.

Anna hoped I hadn't gotten myself in trouble and began telling me about Dana's experience that day. As Dana read announcements in the bulletin area, a woman spoke to her. Never taking her eyes from the board, the woman said "Do not look at or appear to talk to me. I heard your talk in the public square. I know young women who need your message, and yet there is no information in my country. If you could send books and articles to this address, you could save lives." She tacked a note to the bulletin board and continued speaking. I am a teacher in a school for girls. From time to time close relationships develop between the girls, perhaps love relationships... and the girls have no way of learning that their experience is not unique. Several times there have been suicides, double suicides more than once. It is very tragic. If I could tell them there are books to read, books by women who choose love, perhaps some of these girls could be saved."

Anna and I wondered if there was a way to send the books, if the woman receiving them would be endangered. We knew there was censorship and felt that a package mailed from one school to another might be opened by the authorities.

The next day I met Dana in the hall; I asked for the latest news, but her voice was hollow in response. She said she was just waiting to go home. Something was very,



Catherine Clarke Untitled, 1985, blackboard.

Catherine Clarke is a student of American Studies at CUNY Graduate Center.

very wrong. What had happened to this inspiring, patient woman?

"Saturday night, a block from here, I was mugged. A man grabbed me from behind, twisted my arm behind me, and asked for my money. I took it out of my pocket and gave it to him. When he saw it was only twenty shillings, he was furious. He jerked my arm behind me, and as I looked over my shoulder, I saw a knife. Then he punched me in the stomach."

"Why didn't you tell us?"

"All the usual reasons. I had so many feelings. I felt stupid. Responsible. You know the list. I couldn't fight. It was as though I were a little girl again. As though I were a helpless three-year-old rather than who I really am. I'm a marathon runner. I'm an athlete. And I let him hit me. I stood there obediently and let him have my money."

"You felt you should have fought back, and that since you didn't, you were responsible?"

"Maybe. And maybe this comes together

with the freedom I felt in the square. With all those people around me, listening, I felt that the world was becoming a place where everything could be spoken aloud. I felt so accepted for who I was. So loved by all the people who gathered around me. Then the mugging. It was as though it was deliberate. As though I were being—"

"—punished for speaking?"

"Yes, Silenced."

I tried to convince Dana that it was most likely random violence, not retaliation.

"But I feel diminished. It ruined my courage."

"Your courage touched all those who heard you. Think how you changed lives by speaking to them in their silence."

Dana managed to say she would try to hold on to that thought and that she hoped the passage of years would make it easier to focus on that aspect of the conference. Has it? Victims of violence—whether economic, physical, or academic violence—recover at different rates, though it has been said that all losses are the same. And where

does heroism reside? Heroic actions transcend despair, but the person who herself is heroic doesn't always experience it that way. Dana went home feeling defeated, but her courage had an enduring effect on other people, and I wanted to make something of her experience that she may be unable to.

There is also a beautiful political parable in what occurred. We need to be aware of the abuse we experience at the hands of our sisters, the oppression we ourselves create for women. The action of the conference's conveners—excising all lesbian information from the official forum—served only to create a more powerful platform for the ideas and more motivation for lesbian spokespersons to rise to the challenge. In trying to silence them, Dame Barrow succeeded in giving them a greater voice. ☀

Carol Wolfe Konek is an associate dean and faculty member in the Center for Women's Studies at Wichita State University. She writes about the international women's movement, the women's peace movement, and women recovering from chemical dependencies.

Letter from Prison

I am incarcerated in a women's prison in New Jersey. I wish to bring to your attention the need for AIDS education in the prison system in order to bring an end to the cruel and barbaric treatment of those individuals living in prisons who suffer from this deadly disease.

Instead of educating inmates and administrators and staff about the facts of AIDS, prisons allow rumors to be the only source of information. This hinders the treatment of the inmates who suffer from AIDS and consequently increases the fear of prisoners and staff. For example, upon entering this women's institution, an inmate receives one pamphlet that is highly outdated and contains obsolete information. At some time during an inmate's stay at the institution a film is shown. This film does not include any medical information. It is a film made by dying inmates in New York State's prison system, and in it the inmates make a final plea to others not to follow in their footsteps. Unfortunately, by the time an individual is incarcerated it is too late to reconsider and avoid behaviors that have already taken place.

Despite proven medical facts, the State of New Jersey's Department of Corrections chooses to institute primitive methods of treatment of AIDS inmates. While a diagnosis of "full-blown AIDS" is in no way a diagnosis of increased infectiousness, the D.O.C. isolates prisoners suffering from full-blown AIDS from the remaining population. In addition, prisoners are denied access to legal rights as afforded to them through the 8th and 14th Amendments to the United States Constitution. This seems to be a com-

mon trend in all of the prison systems in the United States, except for a very few which have not been seriously affected by dramatic numbers of positive test results. The court systems generally uphold the D.O.C.'s measures because of the anticipated political outcry of a society that is equally uneducated about the facts of the virus.

At this writing there is just one female inmate confined to a Special Medical Unit in the only female institution in the State of New Jersey (this inmate is referred to as Jane Doe in one specific case). However, in 1988 alone there were two deaths that occurred as a result of the lack of proper medical treatment. These women were seriously ill but were denied the "special medical treatment" that is reserved for "Jane Doe"—a woman who has been in complete remission from a bout with PCP in June 1987. Both women who died were confirmed to have been carrying the AIDS virus.

It is a proven medical fact that isolation from all social contact, whether verbal, physical or visual, is detrimental to the immune system of a human being. Medical fact also supports the notion that AIDS is not easily transmittable, and is a behaviorally responsible virus. Despite these facts, our society continues to support the theory that it is safer to confine those who suffer from AIDS in a "leper colony" setting. There is a reason that people are frightened, and that is because of our government's attitude in perpetuating crisis-level educational programming, not only within the correctional system but in society in general. Without support from the public and without education, thousands of inmates—as well as free men and women with AIDS who

inhabit internal prisons—will continue to suffer unnecessarily. For a society that professes to be humane and interested in the welfare of its citizens, the government's treatment of people with AIDS is a poor showing of sincerity.

The author of this letter must remain anonymous because the system referred to above has taken drastic measures to stop all outside communication dealing with the subject of AIDS. This includes the 24-hour lockdown for over a month of the author herself for actively advocating exposure of the system's treatment of AIDS inmates. The author dedicates this letter to J.R., for her unbelievable strength, courage, and determination, which is her motivation to continue this fight.

Dear Folks

I'm buying my mother a subscription to *Heresies* because she is somewhat clueless about the topics that your magazine discusses. Please send her a little "gift card" if you have them.... I'll put it under the tree or something. Maybe she'll stop ironing my dad's shirts.

I read and use *Heresies* extensively. I have been researching the gender gap that exists in the artworld and *Heresies* has lent me some unique insights. Keep it up, etc. As far as I know, I'm the only male that reads your magazine (at my school at least). But I also read military reports and *NCO Magazine* to keep informed on all sides.

Cheers,

C.C.—Hamilton, New York

Poli Sci in '65

Your flyer about the upcoming education issue offered some intriguing questions about women and higher education, and I wanted to share some of my experiences.

At thirty I was a political science major, attending a university that was part of the California state college system. It was the 1965-66 term, and I was to graduate in 1966, after having completed my first two years at a junior college. I had been a high school dropout, had two children and a husband, did all the housework, and had to commute thirty miles one way to school.

There were only three political science professors, as the school was newly opened—I was in the first (four-year) graduating class. The “leading male” prof was aloof and rarely allowed me to speak, but being older I had the guts to speak up anyway. Word soon got to me from other students that he couldn’t understand why a married woman was going to college: What would she do when she got out?

No mentors at that place, I can tell you! Of course, I wouldn’t have known a mentor if I saw one. But my college days were one of the factors that later led me to become a raging feminist.

In my last semester I was short of money for books and fees and tried to borrow from the college emergency fund. As a married woman, I was refused a loan. I cashed in one of my children’s and my own life insurance policies to get \$250.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

While attending university, I decided to make up some work I had started in 1964 at another state school. I contacted my former professor, who said I could make up the work by writing a paper. I did so, and he sent me a grade lower than I thought I deserved. When I called to complain, he asked me to see him in his office, but after arriving there he suggested we talk over coffee at the cafeteria. Everything seemed normal until we got to the cafeteria and he proposed that we have a drink instead. Well, I was thirty years old and had had drinks with men before, including other professors, so without thinking much about it, I agreed.

We went to a nearby bar and ordered. All of a sudden he turned to me, grabbed

me, and kissed me—not passionately or romantically, but hard. I immediately got the message about what I was expected to do to get my grade changed upward.

Well, two can play the game. I let him kiss me, and when he got to the point of wanting to go to a more private setting, I told him I couldn’t that day, as I had a husband who would wonder where I was. He suggested we “make an appointment,” which we did. The next day I went to my only female political science professor at the university and told her the story. She said she knew a way to fix it. She called him on the phone, told him she was my adviser, that I was graduating in a month, and that she had to know my grade in advance of receiving the transcript. He told her I had an A. Later in the day he called me at home, and I had the great pleasure of saying “Sucker,” and hanging up. In spite of her having helped me in this situation, my “savior” apparently never did anything for any of the other women students, nor did she become involved in the women’s movement as far as I know.

GRADUATION

It’s possible I was the top student among the political science majors, but my unseasoned new school decided to have only one graduating classification—“with honors”—for people with averages of 3.0 and above. I had a 3.5 average, completing four years in three with two semesters off in between, so I couldn’t be faulted for not being a serious student. In my last semester I carried twenty-one units while doing dishes, laundry, kids’ homework, and dealing with a husband, since replaced, who was suddenly threatened by my impending graduation.

One fellow student (male) whose average was under three points was “liked” by the department, so they created the classification “With Distinction” for him and arranged his entry into the master’s program at a major university.

In sisterhood,
Barbara A. St. John
Editor, *Teaching Equity*

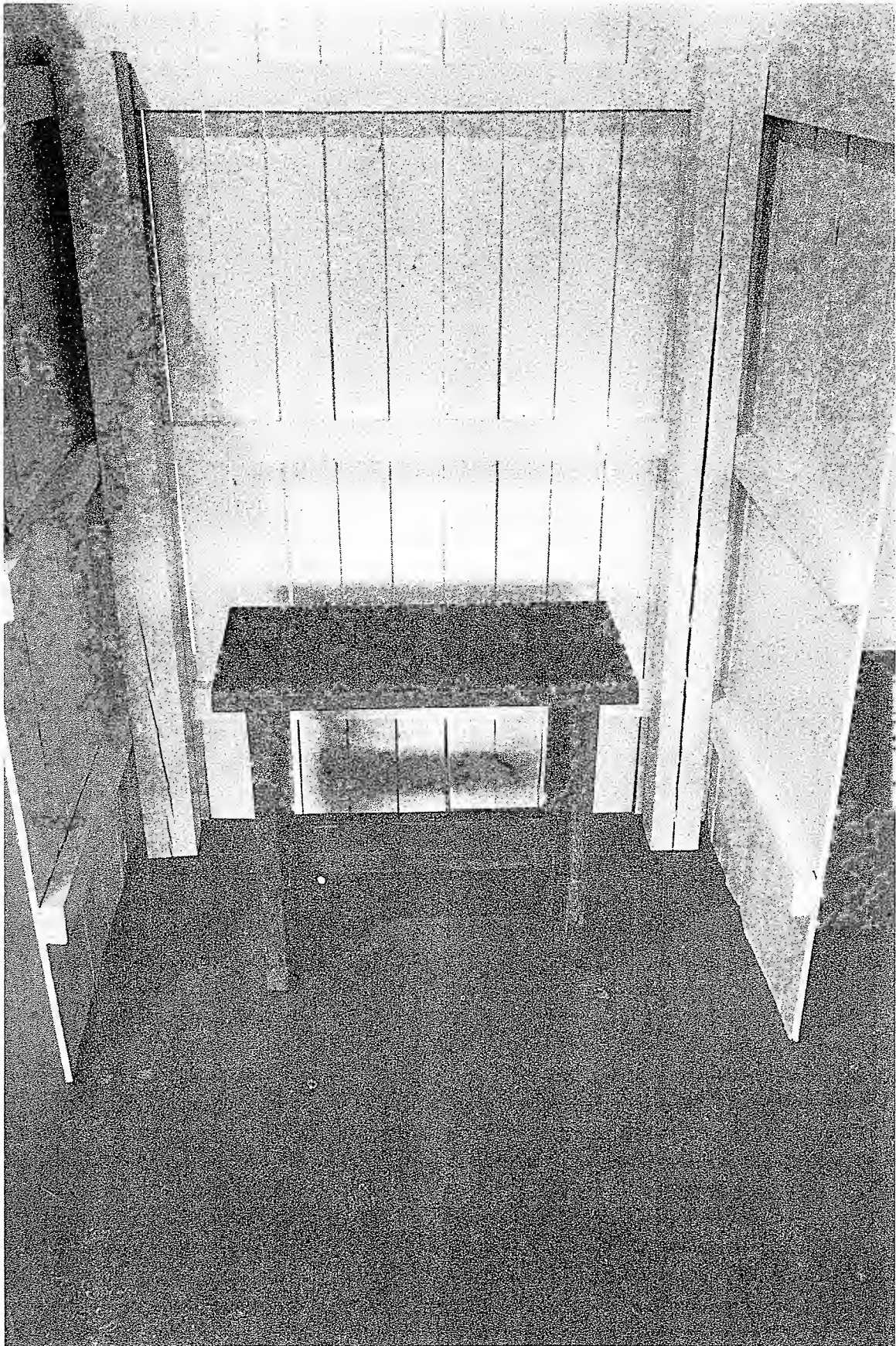
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Sallie McCorkle *Fences*, 1990, fence structure, slate bench & rectangle, 60"x60"x48".

Sallie McCorkle is a sculptor teaching at Pennsylvania State University

Staying Horrified

MARTHA REED HERBERT

I am trying to be a medical student. Or—I *am* a medical student. Who is this I, and what is this role? I hide in the bathroom sometimes, for privacy, or perhaps to cry. I weep, feeling like a soldier in the medical army, a cipher in my little white coat with my toy doctor tools in my pockets, pretending competence. Only rarely, and barely, does the gaze of my superiors discern any qualities I've come to treasure over nearly four decades as my self. I am to learn the skills and the telegraphic communication style of the doctor's world. What relevance is my self—my insights, my associations—to this task? Just as an airline pilot speaking over a scratchy radio would inject dangerous ambiguity by broadcasting metaphors about clouds, I as a doctor must be precise and concise, or someone might die.

Martin, a ten-year-old boy, was the first patient I saw in pediatrics. I had looked forward to this rotation because I love children. Peter Pan's "I won't grow up" is one of my theme songs. Kids aren't yet fully suckered, bribed, and beaten into believing bullshit. Their world is play and imagination. Martin's parents told us his back had been hurting since someone had kicked him a few months ago in the playground, and now his legs were hurting, too. Young boys love horse-play even more than I do, I thought to myself. The first exam by the intern found nothing wrong, except for a large and painless swelling by his lower spine that looked as if a whale were coming up for air. I helped the neurologist do the second exam. As we saw that none of Martin's pain could be explained by trauma, our eyes met to honor the awful emerging truth. The examining room became a crossroads of specialists from all over the hospital who descended to examine the boy and then whispered in small clusters in the hall. I kept the family company as best I could.

Martin was admitted a few hours later, and was soon rushed to emergency neurosurgery to free his spine from the pressure of a tumor that would have crippled him for life in just a few more days. Not that he's likely to live for more than another year; his cancer is wildly disseminated. Even though he hasn't been told his prognosis, he *does* know that he can walk, and

that his excruciating leg pain has stopped.

The rest of the week, as I learned to diagnose ear infections and sore throats, the usual ailments of children, I watched Martin's impact on the community of doctors in the hospital. Everyone knew his story and felt chastened; a doctor two weeks previously hadn't even noticed the mass on his back. What a frightening oversight! Our future patients with back pain will bring Martin to mind, and remind us never to treat complaints as merely routine.

I work in an enormous tertiary care medical center, with esteemed experts and the highest technology. Outside, the park benches across the street are part of the neighborhood's housing stock. And the drug trade in the neighborhood may be as big a business as the hospital. A rumor among local pregnant teenagers that crack eases labor pains influences even the nonusers to come in high for delivery. If a urine toxicology screen reveals crack, they take the baby away, and the only way the mother can get her baby back is to get in a crack rehab program. But there are no crack rehab programs.

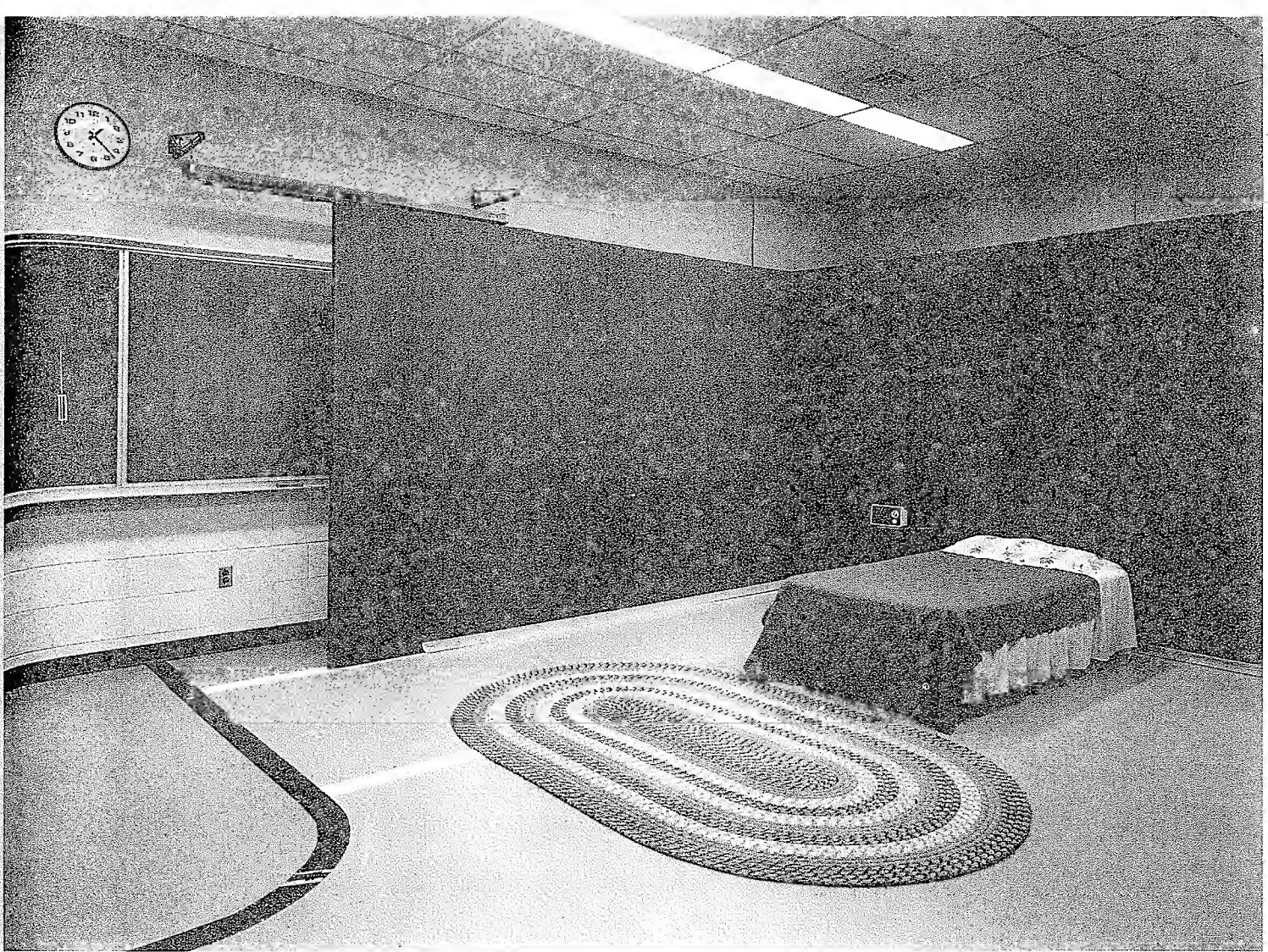
The national accreditation association for medical schools recently told my school to cut down their curriculum by 25 percent because no one can remember that much raw information. But with all the school's zeal to prepare us for our work, we weren't taught Spanish; as a result, after all the rhetoric about how we should relate humanely to our patients, we can't even talk with them, since so many speak no English. Because I managed to teach some Spanish to myself, I now often pathetically serve as translator. But why are these Native American and African-looking people speaking Spanish?

On weekends I've been reading about genocide. Mick Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* talks about the holocaust inflicted by the Putumayo rubber profiteers on the Indians. Unspeakable brutality and the murder of millions, rationalized by projections of the white man's own barbarism onto the victims. Yet while the whites despised the Indians, they still turned to them for their healing, because strangely it seemed to work.

Does my brand of healing work? How many times

In a small
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and for many
generations, there
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pretend that the
misfortune of one
leaves the others
unaffected.

The Art of
Education



Lynne Cohen *Classroom*, n.d. silver print, 20"x24". Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York.

have I turned my clinical gaze upon some Hispanic mother with her stuffed-nosed child and repeated the incantation of my attending physician: "Your child has a viral illness. Don't worry about it; come back in a few days if it doesn't get better, or right away if the fever gets very high." And the mother meekly accepts my pronouncement and goes to the desk to fill out the Medicaid paperwork.

By what authority do I deem the child to be stricken with an innocuous virus? As one of the more forthright attending physicians confided in me, "When we tell them this, we're really just blowing hot air out of our mouths. If we wanted to prove it, we'd have to run viral cultures, and they take too long and are too expensive anyway. And even then there's usually no treatment."

Why has this mother been reduced to turning to the likes of me—indeed, the likes of any of us—for her medical advice? I am told that native medicines used to work a lot better before the white man came.

The white man brought not just new kinds of germs to sickened bodies, but a plague to kill cultures. In a small community where people live together their whole lives, and for many generations, there is no way to pretend that the misfortune of one leaves the others unaffected. So where, then, is the boundary between reweaving the social web and restoring the body's integrity? And where do we want the boundary to be?

What is a viral illness, anyway? Native healing systems didn't have the category of viral illness. Does that prove they were merely hocus-pocus? Is it simply that Western medicine is more thorough and scientific? Then why is the molecular biology of viruses so abstracted from the social context of contagion? And why is the body reduced to a set of physical functions? How do I tell my patients that their illnesses are equally caused by exploitation, uprootedness, and violence? And why are we reduced to *me*, the budding professional, having to tell *them*? How did *they*

gain what we professionals call ignorance?

While Europeans were destroying native cultures abroad, they were burning the bearers of their own cultures' folk knowledge at the stake. Women and native peoples were hunted, degraded, and killed to make way for mechanistic thinking and the rule of the market. And expansionism and pursuit of profit seemed to be fueled by a visceral horror of sensuality and rootedness. Nature and natives, women and witches were seen as unruly and disorderly, needing to be subdued and controlled. Science vehemently excluded unmeasurable sense perception, and any knowledge not mathematizable was strictly second class. I learn this too in my medical training, as they transform me from a *they* into a *we*. "We're only interested in the facts," I was told recently when I gave an interpretation during rounds. But what is a fact? A fact is something that someone is around to measure and document. That means that most things that happen don't get to be facts.

So what things are fact enough to earn entry into the medical record? Diagnosis: malignant mechanistic market economy in Europe; leading to robbery, genocide, and destruction of native lands; followed by violent uprooting; then chronic racism and exploitation, with poor heating, poor nutrition, and overcrowding, providing a grand welcome for pathogens. If I could write that in the chart, it would no longer be enough to give the medicines and advise the bed rest that many in truth cannot afford to take. But only in scattered progressive pockets do practitioners of social medicine even attempt to move beyond seeing illness as an individual's problem to putting the virus

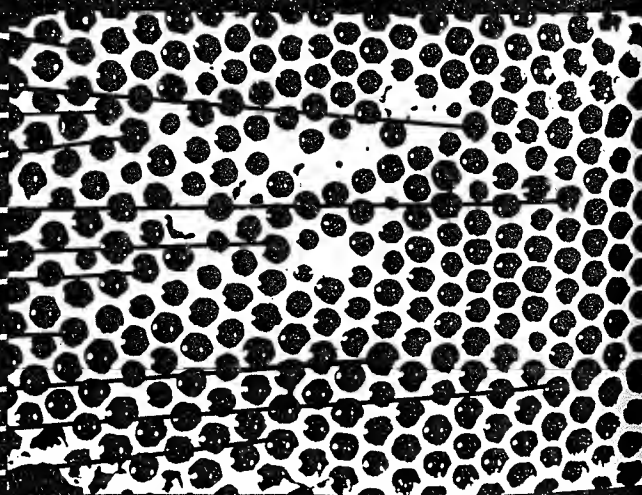
back into the *social* body. And even this social body is too often mechanical.

In my preclinical psychiatry course, we interviewed a nun from a conservative church who was hospitalized for depression. She told us she had been working in a mission in South America, and went into crisis because she had never imagined such poverty. When she questioned why God would allow such misery, she was told by her superiors that such thoughts were sinful. The psychiatrist teaching us made sure we asked all the standard biopsychiatric questions about depression: "Have you been having trouble sleeping? Has your appetite changed? Are you tired? Do you feel low self-esteem? Are you having trouble concentrating? Are you finding it hard to make decisions? Do you have feelings of hopelessness?" I was the only one in the room who asked her about South America and her church. When I asked her if she'd ever heard of Liberation Theology, the teacher cut me off. That night I complained bitterly to a radical psychiatrist friend, expressing my horror that a coherent woman would be incarcerated in a mental ward and kept from learning about the context of her crisis. "Martha," my friend said to me, "stay horrified."

I have recently crossed a threshold, moving from seeing the hospital as an alien and inhospitable culture to dreaming about it every night and finding it intriguing. This is good, because it's hard to learn without falling in love, or at least having a little fling. But it is also dangerous. I am feeling the seductive power now of the medical team, and of the hospital world. I'd barely even imagined such a complex community of cooperation. The medical center where I work and study employs about forty thou-

B E E H I V E

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Park for Prenatal Stimulations
Office for Priority Evaluation
Duct for Nonconstructive Criticism
Green Recreationals
Bureau for Emotional Metamorphosis
Testing of Testing Lab
Ministry of Peace Training
Individual Emancipation Workshop
Center for Restful Stimulation
Ministry of Power Feminization



sand people. I do not know very much about the functioning of the whole: it overwhelms me. I barely know the parts of it where I am starting to participate. I can hardly conceive how to bridge the gap between calculating body fluid management and giving compassion and comfort.

Only recently, while helping a physical examiner more skilled than I am, did I glimpse that sensitively palpating someone's abdomen for masses, or thoughtfully discerning unusual heart sounds, could be a way of expressing love. The act of putting a stethoscope on someone's body could be done with both tenderness and utmost respect. I saw the reverence with which one could bear—not merely witness, but *knowledgeable* witness to another's physical being. And some of my physician preceptors have even taught me in this way.

I treasure my times with my patients, for both the leisure of slow thoroughness I am granted as a student, and for the ease and grace of conversation with regular people. It's easier for me to be *they* than *we*, even in my white coat, which reminds us who is who in the hospital. But these intervals punctuate a day spent in a different time warp. In the amount of time it takes me to keep track of my three patients, my interns keep track of a whole floor and my senior residents keep track of the whole hospital. Moments of pride I've felt in grasping my patient's case have felt smaller beside the doings of these others, who already know my patient's whole story and much more. True, my greater intimacy lets me uncover, or recall, details which are sometimes medically important. But I do not yet have authority or knowledge to bring to bear the larger system. I do not page the neurologist or endocrinologist for a consult on my own initiative. I do not (or not much) choose which patients to send for tests. I am still amazed at case conferences to see how many people can help to think about a single patient.

Perhaps there is a different kind of grace operating here: the virtuosity of coordinating complicated information. Like a foreigner who can finally understand enough words to hear sentences, I am learning a language that I still can barely speak. And the language is full of numbers, spit out rapidly, where the order reveals the identity of each, and where a single figure's deviation from its unstated normal range opens out to a universe of pathophysiological significance. It's like skiing a steep, fast slope where the trees don't matter much unless they're in the way. Yet it still seems odd to me how little "affect," as doctors call it, is expressed in this communication. Even the humor is deadpan.

**How do I tell my
patients that their
illnesses are
equally caused by
exploitation,
uprootedness,
and violence?
And why are we
reduced to me,
the budding
professional,
having to tell
them?**

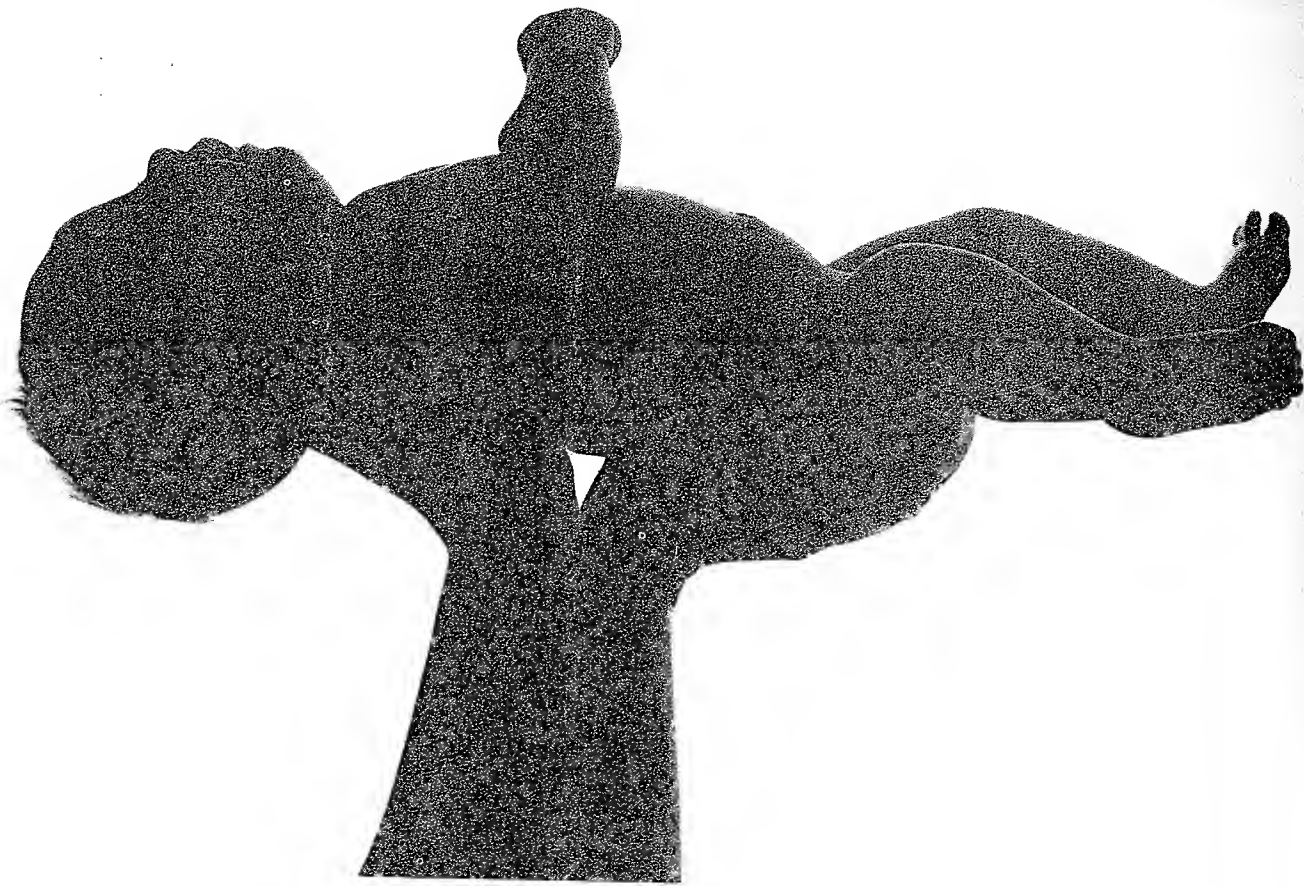
Mouths move much faster than faces or gestures can keep pace. Eyes only track horizontally, or perhaps down to a page, but they do sometimes smile.

What do such eyes not see? Of what does such knowledge remain ignorant? I sometimes wonder whether my very thoughtfulness and tenderness betray the trust of my patients. If I put them off guard, if I allay their suspicions, into what have I seduced them? One day in pediatrics, we rounded on the cardiology ward to see the "interesting findings." A two-year-old girl, born with a gross heart malformation, had been given a heart transplant. Already back from death several times, she is kept on an immunosuppressive drug that has grown black hair all over her arms and legs, and sideburns on her face. Her immune system is kept from rejecting the alien heart, but it will also fail to fight infection or cancer, of which she will probably die. As I approached her chest with my stethoscope, probably the fifteenth person to do so in as many minutes, she raised up her leg and fiercely kicked my hand away. I backed off. She'd made herself as clear as she could, I thought, without knowing how to talk. The next student, though, was undaunted and placed his stethoscope on her chest. The girl furiously kicked her arms and legs, and shook her head from side to side with a rageful expression on her face. An even clearer message, but this time unheeded. Finishing his exam, the student dangled some trinkets above the girl's face. "Look at the pretty toys," he said.

What had the surgeons told her parents? How had they persuaded them to allow their daughter to be transformed from a dead duck to a live guinea pig? Had they told them she would have a longer life? Did they tell her how new the procedure is and how risky the drugs? Did they discuss what *kind* of a life their child would have? Did the surgeons ask the parents to consecrate their daughter to the advancement of medical science? I wonder if the parents are too numb by now to see their own daughter's rage.

Another patient, eight years old, had a very loud heart murmur that we all went to hear. My friend asked him, "Have you ever listened to your heartbeat?" He said no. She put her stethoscope in his ears, and he listened. He looked very interested. How many doctors had seen him, in the half of his life that he's spent in the hospital, without thinking to offer him their stethoscopes?

I teach my patients what I'm doing whenever I can, whenever they show the slightest interest. Before I went to medical school, I taught biology and basic science



Joni Sternbach Untitled, 1989, photograph.

to working-class adults. While teaching I saw the most poignant desire to learn, matched of course by the paucity or resources society assigns to such low-priority human beings: no labs or equipment, no libraries, and me as a teacher, self-taught in science with my art and humanities degrees. Yet I taught them better than I was later taught in school myself. I nurtured then—and still nurture—a vision of a people's reappropriation of science. And I truly believe you can seduce anyone if you figure out how to tickle their curiosity. Play and intrigue can melt hard armor, and they are the way back, I think, to connected creativity, to thinking for ourselves and together about how to live on this earth. I am daunted now, inside the belly of the monster, by the enormous effort and reevaluation this vision demands. Maybe I should stick with the play and compassion, and forget the knowledge and skill. But it's too late for that; curiosity has me hooked.

One day, when the clinic was slow, an eight-year-old girl came in with her sick little brother. While she bubbled over with questions about every little thing I did, she told me how she could never go to college because it would be too hard—she wanted to be a secretary like

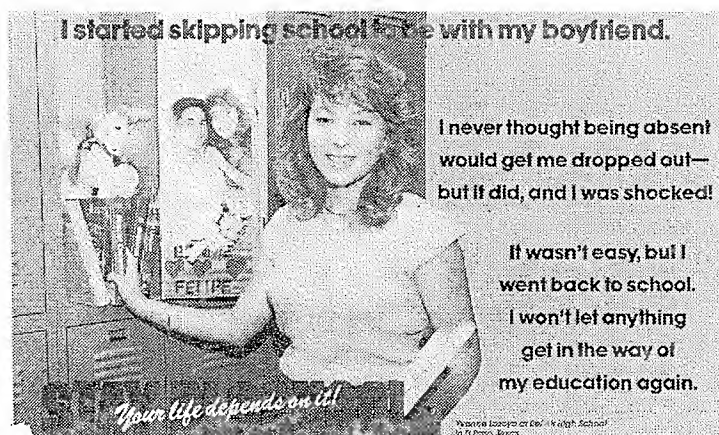
her aunt. Having escaped from that dire fate myself, I wanted to save her, too. I lavished praise on her intelligence—to her mother (in Spanish), to the attending physicians, to anyone who could mirror it back to her. And I gave her my instruments, and let her examine me. She looked into my eyes with my ophthalmoscope and saw the delicate red blood vessels spidering their way along the yellow retina toward the optic nerve—and she even saw them pulsing with the heartbeat. She saw my eardrum, with the tiny sound-conducting bones behind it, and the opalescent way it reflects the light. She looked inside my nose and peered up into the tall, dark, and narrow nasal cavern with its sheer, steep, curving pink walls. She listened to my heart and her mother's and her brother's and her own. I taught her how to measure blood pressure. I told her that there's nothing worse than being deadly bored, and that she shouldn't let anyone stop her from dreaming big dreams. "Go to college," I said, "You'll thrive on the challenge, and it will be fun." And I hope I gave her something to remember. With the choices I saw her facing, I didn't stop to discuss what she might forget.

Martba R. Herbert is a teacher, writer, medical student, and unrepentant materialist utopian.

NOTICE

This is to inform our readers that the "Women on Men" issue is being delayed as a result of our former office manager having removed without permission more than \$12,000 from the Heresies corporation account (monies that were a combination of state and federal grants awarded for the publication of the "Women on Men" issue). In addition, at that time she also collected and removed all the materials for the "Women on Men" issue. To date she has refused to return either the funds or the materials to us. Heresies Collective, Inc. has been in litigation with her and her husband, who was also a signatory on the account into which the funds were originally placed, but to date we have been unable to settle.

An injunction was obtained by our lawyers against the defendants in the case entitled *Heresies v. Kenny and Alexander*, which is pending in the New York County Supreme Court. We expect to go to trial before the end of this year to resolve this matter. Further information can be obtained from our attorneys, Alterman & Boop, P.C., 349 Broadway, New York, NY 10013, Tel. 212-226-2800.



Yvonne Lozoya's poster is one of ninety-one posters on dropout prevention, women and work, and women's history available from the Organization for Equal Education of the Sexes, 808 Union Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Catalogue \$2.

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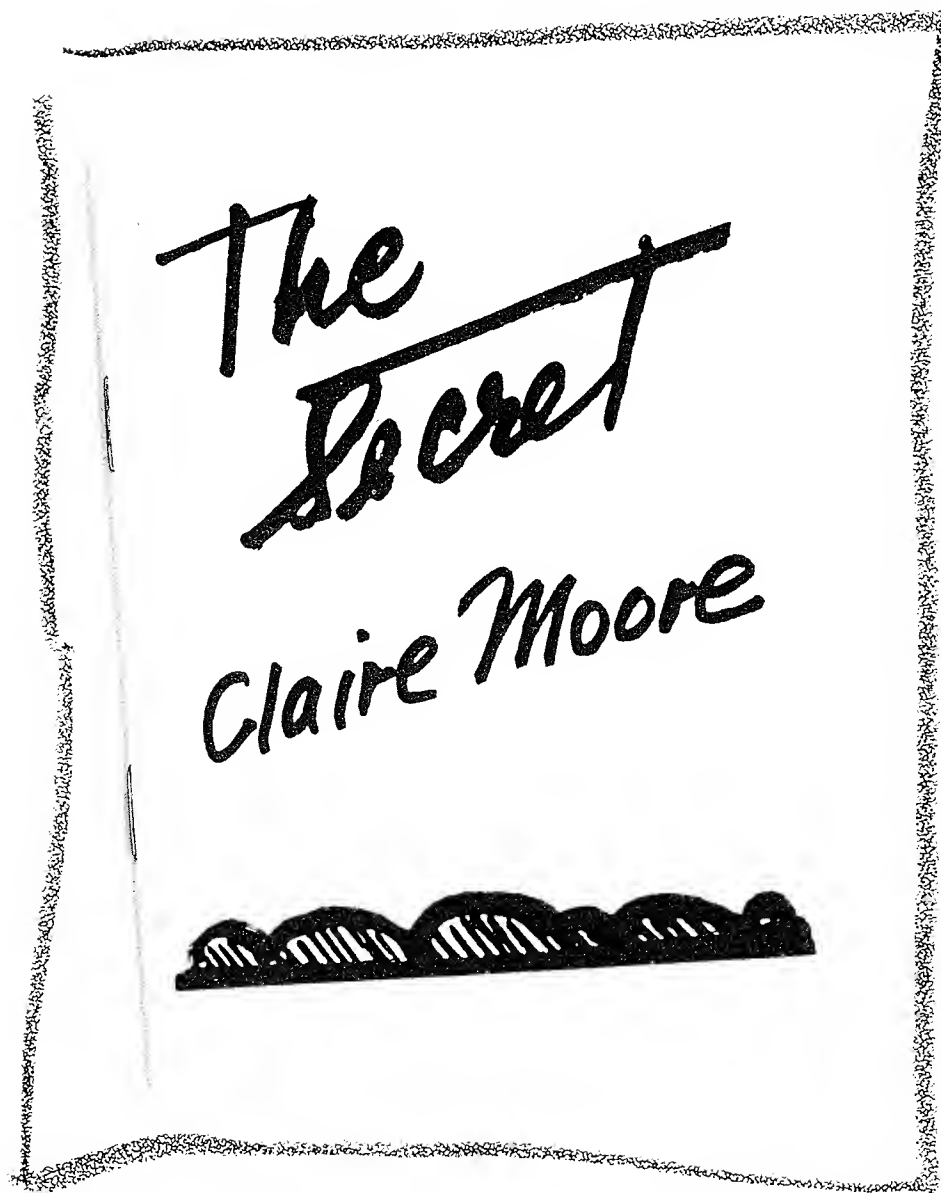
MADHOUSE MADHOUSE KATE MILLETT

In 1972 through misguided family intervention I was caught and held in a California madhouse. And again in 1980, this time in Ireland where my sympathy with the hunger strikers and my 'record' made it possible for the police to commit me indefinitely to a back ward asylum in County Clare.

I was fortunate that both imprisonments were brief. Few are so fortunate. But I have a record now; it could happen again. Any time.



Kate Millett is a New York sculptor and writer. She has been sculpting in mixed media for 30 years.



Claire Moore *The Secret*, artist's book, ca. 1987.

Claire Moore 1912–1988

The Secret was one of Claire Moore's last hand-editioned books. A painter, writer, and teacher, Claire mimographed her drawings and visual stories in book form before today's copy machines were in broad use. Many of her books are in the Museum of Modern Art library and the Franklin Furnace Archive.

Claire studied in New York with Werner Drewes and Fernand Leger and worked alongside Jackson Pollock in the mural painting workshop of David Siquieros. She married, painted, and studied with David Park in California before returning to New York to raise her daughter, Nellie, as a single parent. The figure and words about space and human anxieties, placed in a setting of outer space, were the subject of Claire's paintings of the last years. A mentor to many artists, writers, and poets, Claire was optimistic about the future. She died in August 1988 before the openings of a show of paintings at June Kelly Gallery and a show of works on paper at Susan Teller Gallery.

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